00027041

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

DISPAUPERIZATION

LONDON : PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

DISPAUPERIZATION

A POPULAR TREATISE

ON

POOR-LAW EVILS AND THEIR REMEDIES

BY

J. R. PRETYMAN, M.A.

'The degree of indigence and misery is exactly in proportion to the assistance given to the poor by rates'—ARTHUR YOUNG

27041 aC

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1878

All rights reserved

00027041

CONTENTS.

SECTION		PAGE
I.	Poor Law History.	1
II.	Terms 'Labouring' and 'Working' Classes . .	40
III.	Material Mischief to the Hand-Working Classes .	42
IV.	Demoralization of the Lower Classes . .	100
V.	Effect of the Poor Law on Classes above .	154
VI.	Economic Aspect of the Poor Law . . .	161
VII.	Steps in Abolition and Remedial Measures . .	170
VIII.	Self-Help and Voluntary Relief . . .	254

DISPAUPERIZATION.

SECTION I.

POOR LAW HISTORY.

INDIGENCE must in every commonwealth be a frequent source of difficulty and danger. In all national strifes and convulsions it is either the primary cause or a powerful factor. When the mass of a people are prosperous, contentment and peace usually prevail, while in all clamours of the angry multitude the ominous voice of indigence is the ground-note, now subdued, now breaking forth in those tones of terror which are the prelude to revolutionary violence and excess. Indigence is the natural ally of faction, the sworn enemy of public security and order, of law and authority. The political self-seeker, or political fanatic, in his assaults upon the social fabric, knows that he can always reckon on the co-operation of the indigent. These, at the prospect of a public disturbance, pour forth in unexpected numbers, no one knows whence, under the instinctive knowledge that the confusion

which they will help to create may be their harvest, and cannot be their loss. The bulk of all mobs, it has been truly said, consists of idle vagabonds, who would not work if they could, that is, of persons who through their own fault are poor. The half-starved apothecary in Shakspeare felt the force of Romeo's reminder,

> The world is not for thee, nor the world's law.

There is a standing quarrel on the part of the 'Have-nots' against the 'Haves.' 'It is ill talking between a fu' man and a fasting.' A hungry and penniless vagrant, passing along a street on a wintry day, and looking through the windows of a substantial mansion into a well-furnished dining-room with its table laid out in preparation for a sumptuous entertainment, and with its well-filled fire-place throwing a comfortable glow over the apartment, would be a man of a rarely well-balanced mind if he felt no ill-will towards the owner of all these signs of plenty and enjoyment.

Indigence hates all aristocracies alike, whether of wealth, birth, or intellect. This triple hatred showed itself notably during its brief triumph under 'Jack Cade,' by massacring alike rich men and nobles, and clerks 'with inkhorns round their necks.' It showed itself still more notably in France during what has been called 'the Republic of the Poverties,' the cruel reign of 'sansculottism,' under which 'blue-blood,' or the appearance of wealth, was equivalent to sentence of death, and the Girondist aristocracy of intellect was doomed as 'worse than the aristocracy of birth.'[1]

If indigence be 'the teacher of arts and the dispenser

[1] See Carlyle's 'French Revolution.'

of genius,'[1] the mother of industry and of useful inventions, 'instructive and productive beyond Academical curriculums,' it is nevertheless the prompter of all specious but impracticable theories of right or benevolence with regard to the possession and distribution of wealth. To what inspiration but poverty are to be ascribed the dreams of fraternity, equalization of possessions, socialism, and communism? The very terms are but translations of the vague and lawless wishes of discontented poverty into the pompous language of pseudo-philanthropy and fallacious political speculation.

In every political community indigence is an obstinate fact, which can neither be got rid of, nor ignored. Avoid the hideous monster here, and it will reappear there; attempt to suppress and crush it, as was attempted in years previous to the great French Revolution, and it rises, Antaeus-like, more formidable from the earth. It is the constant shadow, an ever-present punishment, of human folly, passion, and vice. It is a rugged intractable element in human society, defying all attempts to bring it into compass, to regulate, drill and reduce it to rhythmical order and shape; nay, it is so chaotic, that every attempt even to bring it within the terms of a conventional definition has been made in vain. Like disease and other human ills, it is a negation, and runs into 'the infinite' and illimitable. It is too uncouth and grim a reality to be capable of being 'kempt' and trimmed according to some specious spick-and-span theory, and put into holiday attire and

[1] 'Magister artis et largitor ingeni.'—*Pers.*—The words which follow are to the present point—'Negatas artifex sequi voces.'

made to look neat and comely, like a troop of villagers on the stage, or as it was represented in Potemkin's extemporized Russian villages, with sham fronts of picturesque cottages and with festive country-folks dancing to order, for the purpose of deceiving his imperial mistress into the belief that there was no destitution in her dominions.

All attempts to abolish or prevent it by law have proved not merely failures, but aggravations of the evil, and productive of still greater evils. The treatment of it, like other social problems, is a problem which has recurred at various ages of the world, and is incapable of any considerably approximate solution.[1]

Indigence has accordingly been the great crux of legislators and statesmen. Looking to the annals of the past, we find that in the Hebrew commonwealth a remedy was provided against poverty in the ordinance that the lot which each family had received in dividing the land of a conquered country should, if it had been alienated, return at the end of fifty years to the original possessor or his heirs. This ordinance, however, appears to have been more or less evaded by legal contrivances, of which the effect was the speedy resumption of the land by the creditor or mortgagee. Provision for the mitigation of poverty was also made by precept

[1] The remark of Dr. Johnson on the *rationale* of poverty is worthy of consideration. It shall be given in the language of his biographer. 'Observing some beggars in the streets as we went along, I said to him, I supposed there was no civilized country where the misery of want was prevented.

'*Johnson.* I believe, sir, there is not; but it is better that some should be unhappy than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality.' Boswell's 'Johnson,' vol. iii. p. 391. Croker's Edition.

and exhortation to the practice of beneficence, forbearance toward debtors in their extremity, and a liberal treatment of dependants. A release of Hebrew debtors every seventh year was ordained.[1] A tenth part of the produce of every third year was to be devoted to the hospitable entertainment of 'the Levite and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow.'[2]

This was undoubtedly a poor-tax; but the difference between it and our modern English poor-rate is seen in the circumstances that the Mosaic contribution was a fixed quantity, whereas our poor-rate varies in amount directly with the number of applicants; that the dispensers of the Mosaic poor-tax are left free to select the particular individuals on whom the proceeds of it shall be bestowed; and that the payment of it was not enforced by any legal process or penalty, but left to the religious and charitable feelings of the several owners of the soil. Such, then, were the provisions of the Mosaic law with regard to indigence.

Yet, even thus, the Hebrew legislator warned his countrymen that 'the poor would never cease out of the land.' In Hebrew history we may observe, by the way, a significant instance both of the existence of poverty and of the part which it readily plays in opposition to power. There we have the case of a divinely-designated heir to the throne compelled, for the preservation of his life, to assume an attitude of armed defence against the murderous attempts of the occupant of the throne, and speedily surrounded by a desperate body-guard of 'everyone that was in distress,

[1] Deut. xv. 1, 2. [2] Deut. xiv. 28, 29.

and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented,'[1] for whose maintenance he seems to have levied a sort of 'black-mail' upon wealthier persons, like that which in modern days the needy clans of the Scottish Highlands practised on the 'Southrons.'

In the early times of Greece a similar method obtained for the relief of indigence, according to the following account given by Thucydides: 'The Hellenes of old, and those barbarians who lived near the sea or in islands, when they had begun the practice of passing over to each other in ships, took to piracy under the conduct of their chief men, with a view to their own gain and to the maintenance of the needy.'[2] In fact, these piratical Hellenes and barbarians of old, in levying forced contributions in behalf of their poor, were, after a fashion of their own, anticipating the principle of 'compulsory relief,' on which our own Poor Laws are framed. The institutions of the great Spartan legislator, which were designed to prevent the existence of wealth, would seem at first sight calculated to prevent indigence also, by such a division of land as would secure to every head of a family a sufficient portion, which was to be inalienable. This regulation, however, could not resist the tendency of human nature to buying and selling, and of property to accumulation. Practice prevailed against law, and the property came to be vested chiefly in the hands of a few owners.

[1] 1 Samuel, xxii. 2.

[2] Οἱ γὰρ Ἕλληνες τὸ πάλαι καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων οἵ τε ἐν τῇ ἠπείρῳ παραθαλάσσιοι καὶ ὅσοι νήσους εἶχον, ἐπειδὴ ἤρξαντο μᾶλλον περαιοῦσθαι ναυσὶν ἐπ' ἀλλήλους, ἐτράποντο πρὸς λῃστείαν, ἡγουμένων οὐ τῶν ἀδυνατωτάτων, κέρδους τοῦ σφετέρου αὐτῶν ἕνεκα καὶ τοῖς ἀσθενέσι τροφῆς. Thuc. B. I. ch. 5.

It appears that in other Grecian States attempts were made by legislators to prevent a lapse of the citizens into poverty by a division of lands among them all, probably at the first settlement, and by forbidding the representatives of the original possessors respectively to alienate their lands. It is evident that such a prohibition, if it could be enforced, would only increase poverty by debarring the new citizens, who would spring up as time went on, from all participation in the advantages of the possession of land: and would prove a fertile source of civil discord by occasioning malevolent feelings on the part of this increasing body against the exclusive possessors of the soil. But as a matter of course, any such prohibition of alienation, if not openly violated, would soon be evaded by legal devices, as it happened afterwards in the case of the feudal system. Accordingly, Aristotle, in his 'Politics,' remarks with his usual acuteness, that those legislators who divided the lands of a State among a certain number of citizens, with the intention that the division should be permanent, ought also to provide that there should be no increase in the number of citizens! Conformably with this remark, the philosopher in his own ideal commonwealth would divide the land equally among his citizens, and prevent the increase of their number by the practice of abortion! Thus taught a Pagan philosopher! By such and other precautions it is said that small landed properties are kept in the same families respectively in France at the present day.

To return to the history of Poor-law in ancient Greece.

At Athens, as one of her writers tells us, there was

no indigence in the time of Solon, that is, at an early period of her history.[1] This statement would appear to be an exaggeration, but its substantial truth is confirmed by a fact which another author mentions, that this great law-giver, by way of preventing indigence, obliged every citizen, presumably without independent means, to belong to some profession or trade, and to show at certain times how he gained his livelihood:[2] an institution which he is said to have borrowed from Egypt. According to this law of Solon, a father who had neglected to provide his son with some occupation, would afterwards in his old age have no legal claim to be supported by him. This provision would prevent that hereditary destitution so often seen in our own community—generation after generation of the same family contentedly succeeding to a patrimony of abjectness and dependance. It was another of Solon's enactments in regard to poverty that the poorer citizens should be taxed less, in rateable proportion to their means, than the better-to-do would be taxed. In fact, as it has been observed, the provisions of the great Athenian legislator in this matter were directed not to the relief of the poor, but to the prevention of poverty. Afterwards, when the profession of demagogue was set up in that State, the pauperizing practice came in of paying citizens who acted as 'jury-men,'[3] and later still

[1] Isocrates, as quoted in Langhorne's 'Plutarch.'

[2] Plutarch's 'Life of Solon.'

[3] This practice was begun by Pericles, but not settled as a regular thing till the time of Cleon, that true type of the whole demagogue class. As the citizens who acted in their turn as jurymen in that litigious community were paid so much for each sitting, it became their interest to try as few causes as possible at one sitting. Readers

this payment, which amounted to about $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ for each sitting, was extended to all poor citizens, whenever in that polity of universal suffrage they chose to attend the sovereign assembly of the people.

Nor was this the only way by which the poorer citizens of Athens were gratified and pauperized. The government, aided by voluntary contributions, accumulated stores of corn, to be retailed at a low price, or sometimes doled out, to the people, in times of scarcity. In addition to this, largesses were often made to the populace from public funds, that is, at the expense of the taxpayers, on the motion of this or that interested demagogue.[1] All these gratuities would seem, as we may observe in passing, to account for the indolence and babbling habits of the Athenian people, as noticed both by Demosthenes and by the writer of the Acts of the Apostles. The Athenian-pauper citizen, what with the payments which he would receive as juryman and for attending the sovereign assembly, besides his frequent or even regular doles, and his provisions bought cheaply at the expense of his neighbours, would in that climate make up a sufficiency of public support to enable him to enjoy to the full his favourite

of Aristophanes will remember how frequently that great painter of Athenian manners satirizes his countrymen for receiving pay as jurymen and assembly-men—'clansmen of the three-obol piece'—and at the distributions made to them by the instrumentality of interested demagogues. The following specimen of his satire shall be given in the words of Mr. Frere's translation :—

'Moreover, if a couple of orators were pleading in your presence, one proposing to equip a fleet, his rival arguing to get the same supplies distributed to the jurymen ; the patron of the juries carried the day.' Knights.

[1] Böckh's 'Public Economy of Athens.'

pastime of lounging and gossiping in the market-place. In fact, in this and other ancient States in the South of Europe, the warmth and productive benignity of the climate, rendering the necessaries of life both few and cheap, together with the institution of slavery, which absorbed nine-tenths of the population, precluded the existence of those aggregations of indigence which we find in modern States of more northerly latitudes, and rendered the difficulties of dealing with the subject less than those which are presented to modern statesmen. However, the demoralising effects of the State-doles at Athens are familiar to the readers of Demosthenes, who denounces these gratuities as the ruin of the nobler sentiments of the citizens, of their manly independence, and self-respect. 'You are become,' says he to his countrymen, 'as underlings and hangers-on, happy if these people dole out to you show-money and beeves, making you tame to their hands like domestic fowls.' The patriotic orator goes on to speak of 'these perquisites, which are like the diet ordered by physicians for the sick; as that neither imparts strength, nor allows the patient to die, so your allowances are not enough to be of substantial benefit, nor yet permit you to reject them and turn to something else.'[1] It may be mentioned in passing, that the show-money, which formed a part of the State distributions to the pauper citizens of Athens, was given in order that they might attend the representations of the drama, which formed the great means of amusement and instruction for the people. We may here remark, that something like a parallel to this public provision for the intellectual entertainment

[1] Demosthenes 'Olynthiae' ii. 9, 10.

of the Athenian people is furnished amongst ourselves by the establishment, in our large towns, of museums and free libraries for the use of the 'poor,' so called, at the expense of the rate-payers.[1] However, another

[1] Amusement laws for the handworking population, which may be regarded as a branch of Poor Laws, seem to be in vogue at the present day. Places of amusement ought, it seems, to be provided at the expense of rate-payers! Such at least is the conviction of one of the administrators of the law, to judge by the following statement: 'The Recorder of Manchester, at the opening of the City Sessions on Thursday, reiterated a suggestion he has often made to the grand jury, that they should devise and provide some places of recreation for the working classes.' (*Pall Mall Gazette*, Dec. 18, 1876.) This surely is class-legislation with a vengeance! And the question may fairly be asked why, on the same principle, should not suitable recreation and amusement be provided at the public expense for the head-working classes also, whose circumstances are often far more pinching than those of many hand-workers—doctors without private means and with but few patients, barristers living on the hope of briefs, clerks in public and private offices with 'starvation salaries,' and booksellers' hacks? It may also be asked whether those philanthropists, who would provide by law recreation and amusement for the hand-working classes in our large towns, have calculated the expense as well as considered the injustice which would thus be caused to the rate-paying public in behalf, not only of the hand-working classes, but of the needy head-working classes also? We learn, as regards the provision of instruction and entertainment at the public cost, that the 'Free Library' at Birmingham, for an example, is supported at a cost of 7,000*l.* a year to the rate-paying inhabitants of that town. As to the education of the children of our wages-earning classes, it is, according to recent legislation, to be carried on at the rate-payers' expense, when the parents are ostensibly unable to bear it. Thus are the accessories of life, amusements, instruction, education, to say nothing of the necessaries of life, to be found, not by self-help, but at the public cost. The notion of finding amusements for the hand-working classes at the compelled expense of other classes has found its way into Parliament, as we may judge by the following notice given in the House of Commons on the last day of its Session in 1877:—

'Mr. Egerton Hubbard: To call the attention of the House next Session to the importance of providing open spaces in towns, *and places for indoor amusement* in both town and country.' One may ask,

Athenian orator, Demades, scornfully ridiculing the donations of public meat, and their pitiful effect on the public spirit, compares the Athenian republic to 'an old woman, sitting at home in her slippers, and supping her broth.' The issue of the contest between a people thus pauperized and slothful, though capable of an occasional spasmodic effort, and their crafty, enterprising, and powerful enemy, could not be long doubtful.

A better method, however, of relieving poverty was frequently practised in the earlier and better times of Athenian history, viz., that of sending out colonies of poorer citizens, as their number increased, to other and less populous regions, where they founded separate States. This way of dealing with a surplus of population overtaking the means of subsistence in a given spot —for this result will always happen in the natural working of things, and has been formulated into the doctrine that the means of subsistence increase only in an arithmetical ratio, while population increases in a geometrical ratio—this transplantation of surplus population, in manifest accordance with the order of nature, was largely practised by peoples of ancient times, who in this way 'replenished the earth and subdued it.' Thus we read that the Lydians of old,[1] pressed during many years by the scarcity of food, and having experimentally discovered that what was enough food for one person was not enough for two, sent off a colony consisting of one-half of their population to seek settlement

does the honourable gentleman propose that theatres and billiard-rooms should be among the 'places of indoor amusement' which he would have provided from the rates for the hand-working classes 'in both town and country?'

[1] Herodotus, B. i. ch. 94.

in the West, to which the tide of emigration has usually rolled since the beginning of human history. Returning, however, to the case of Athens, we find further, as regards the public provisions made there for poverty, that that State regularly brought up, at the public expense, the children of the poorer citizens who had fallen in their country's battles, and that orphans of the poorer citizens generally had allowances of food, and were placed under the special protection of certain authorities of the State. Some public provision also seems to have been made for the impotent citizens, *ἀδύνατοι*. Public aliment was provided for citizens who had been wounded in battle; and it appears that similar provision came to be extended to citizens who had been impoverished by misfortune, or who were disabled by age—a provision which came to be greatly abused, as might have been expected, and which probably formed part of that pauperizing and demoralizing system of public doles, of which we have already made mention in this sketch of Athenian 'poor law.'

The great and flourishing commercial and maritime State of Rhodes appears to have anticipated a practice for relieving the poor, which, as we shall hereafter mention, has been adopted considerably in modern states, with results to which reference will be made—the employment of them in public works. So little novelty is there under the sun! Of the duration or success of this method among the Rhodians we have no positive means of judging. It appears, also, that this state made distributions of corn to indigent people. A large number of colonies were at different times sent out by this commonwealth, to the manifest relief of the

pressure of the increasing population on its resources. Among the Cretans, it appears that the orphan children of poor parents were permitted to feed at certain tables which were provided at the public expense. In the ancient states, generally, it is to be observed that the multiplication of the citizen population was encouraged, under the notion that numbers increased the strength of the state, and that, therefore, it became incumbent to take steps to prevent or remedy the poverty and indigence which an increase of population would naturally cause.[1]

At Rome, before the times of the empire, it was the practice occasionally to draft off from the city a surplus of poorer citizens, and relieve their condition by making them tenants, under the state, of allotted portions of the land which had been taken from the inhabitants of conquered cities and peoples. These lands were called the 'ager publicus,' and the division and occupation of them was the subject of those 'agrarian' disputes which at different times distracted the commonwealth, but into the nature and merits of which it is not our present business to enter. Colonies also of poorer citizens were at different times sent forth into countries more or less remote from the city.

Privileges were given by an enactment of Augustus to the parents of three children ('jus trium liberorum'), among which was a treble dole of the corn, regularly

[1] For some of this information relative to poverty and pauperism in the commonwealths of ancient Greece, the present writer is indebted to the able author of the Oxford Latin Prize Essay for 1877, on the question, 'Quomodo in antiquis civitatibus pauperes indigentesque publice aut privatim sublevabantur?'

distributed, as we shall presently mention, under the empire, to poorer citizens.

In the better days of Roman history, a peculiar social institution—the relation between *patronus* and *cliens* (patron and dependant)—greatly tended to the mitigation of poverty. It was the part of the patron to give all needful assistance, with his substance or otherwise, to the dependant, who, in his turn, rendered to his patron such service as was consistent with the sentiments and duty of a Roman citizen. This beneficent institution notwithstanding, there had grown up at a particular period of Roman history a mass of poverty, owing probably to the constant belligerency of the state, which would take away thousands of the citizens from their industrial occupations. With the ostensible object of diminishing this mass, one of the brothers Gracchus passed a law enabling citizens to purchase corn at a fixed low price, and providing that the difference between it and the market price should be paid out of the public treasury.[1] The effect of this law on the habits of the lower orders, and on the resources of the state, may be seen from the following statement of Cicero :—'The law gratified the lower orders, for they had a plentiful supply of food without working for it. The respectable citizens disliked this law, because they thought that by it the lower orders were turned away from industry to sloth, and because they saw that the treasury was being exhausted by it.'[2]

[1] This was the 'Lex Sempronia frumentaria.'

[2] 'Jucunda res plebi Romanae, victus enim suppeditabatur largè sine labore. Repugnabant boni, quod et ab industriâ plebem ad desidiam avocari putabant, et aerarium exhauriri videbatur.' Cic. *Pro Sext.* 103.

After some years' experience of the operation of this law, the people 'in full assembly' repealed it.[1] The obligations, however, of the aforesaid relation between 'patronus' and 'cliens' were relaxed proportionately as the ancient discipline of the Roman State declined; and the great satirist of the empire laments, as one sign of the degeneracy of his days, the neglect and illiberality with which the 'patronus' then too commonly treated his 'clientes.'[2]

Concurrently, it seems, with the decline of the beneficent institution of 'clientela' aforesaid for the succour of poverty, there was introduced a degrading and demoralising practice, much resembling the out-door relief of our own Poor Laws, the regular distribution of food tickets to the poorer citizens by the Emperors.[3]

This practice was at once a symptom and a reacting cause of the debasement of the Roman people. They, who were once eminent for their active and frugal virtues, became idle pensioners on public funds, a degraded populace of paupers. Accordingly, the Roman satirist has described this once highminded and powerful com-

[1] Juvenal, Satires I., 132–4; III., 124–5; V.

[2] 'Legem Semproniam frumentariam populi frequentis suffragiis abrogaverit.' Cic. *Brutus*, 222.

This law is described by Livy in the Epitome of Book LX. as 'Lex perniciosa,' a pernicious law. Appian says it was intended by Gracchus as a political move against the Senate. 'He plotted against the Senate by ordaining a monthly distribution of corn to each of the citizens from the public purse, thus introducing a new custom.'

'Ἐπεβούλευε τῇ βουλῇ, σιτηρέσιον ἔμμηνον ὁρίσας ἑκάστῳ τῶν δημότων ἀπὸ τῶν κοινῶν χρημάτων οὐ πρότερον εἰωθὸς διαδίδοσθαι.'

[3] Nero, it appears, was especially liberal in these largesses to the populace—the tax-payers suffering.

monalty as limiting its aspirations to doles of bread and gratuitous admission to the Circus.[1]

> This people now has cast away its cares;
> The giver, erewhile, of the fearful wands
> Of office, legions, generals' commands,
> All powers and honours, now contracts its aims,
> Craving but these two things, bread and the games.

No wonder that a people thus sunk in sloth and dependence became an easy prey to the fierce barbarians of the North, who came down in hungry swarms to extort 'compulsory relief' and 'settlement' from the wealthier inhabitants of the South!

Long, however, before this final catastrophe, a kind of poor law was made by the Emperor Trajan, which deserves mention in this slight sketch of Poor Law history; though we have no means of judging of its subsequent operation. By the ordinance of this emperor a fund was instituted for the maintenance of poor boys and girls, whom their parents could not or would not rear. Sums of money were lent by him to large land-owners, who were to pay the interest to a special bounty-office, which distributed the amount to the recipients throughout Italy. This measure repressed infanticide—that common resource, by the way, of ab-

[1] Juv., Satire X. 78–81:—

> Effudit curas; nam qui dabat olim
> Imperium, fasces, legiones, omnia, nunc se
> Continet, atque duas tantum res anxius optat:
> Panem et Circenses.

The contemporary Roman satirist, Persius, speaks contemptuously of a claim to a food-ticket as one of the privileges of a Roman citizen under the Empire. Sat. V. 73–75. These distributions were regularly organized—a roll of recipients kept, and 'relieving officers' for the purpose.

ject poverty, as we see in China even now, and which in order to prevent poverty was, as some of my readers may recollect, theoretically systematised in our own day in the Socialistic politico-philanthropic schemes of certain French regenerators of society, the Fourierists, in whose *phalanstères*, or inhabited parallelograms, beautifully decorated flower-gardens were provided for the reception of surplus infants after their 'painless extinction.'

However, the afore-mentioned 'poor law' of the Emperor Trajan, while it repressed infanticide, and so replenished an exhausted population, did nothing directly for the 'able-bodied' pauper.[1]

In the early times of Christianity the care of widows, orphans, the sick and impotent, poor and destitute persons generally, was made a primary duty of the authorities and members of Christian congregations. One typical instance of this general fact shall be mentioned. During one of the great persecutions at Rome, the Prefect of the city required the Bishop of Rome to deliver up to him all 'the treasures of his Church,' adding that, as Christians by their profession despised earthly splendour, they could have no occasion for gold or silver plate or jewels in the celebration of their worship. The Bishop promised that on a certain day 'the treasures of his Church' should be brought together in the sacred building, and placed at the disposal of the Prefect. On the appointed day when the Prefect came he found the sacred building filled with a number of destitute, sick, impotent and aged people, and when he had asked where were the promised treasures, was answered by the Bishop that these people were 'the treasures of his Church!'

[1] Capes' 'Age of the Antonines.'

Indeed, throughout the primitive Church a considerable part of the offerings and collections made in the congregations were applied to the relief of such persons.

Nor in subsequent and mediæval times was this bounty by any means neglected by the clergy or by wealthy laymen of the Church. In some cases a third or fourth part of the tithes, which were originally free-will offerings, were devoted to the succour of the needy. Foundations by gift or will were devoted to this purpose, and the monasteries in particular were perennial sources of pious beneficence. These were, in one point of view, so many endowed charities for the relief of the poor; for they were receptacles of a great number of poor persons as inmates, and they fed multitudes of poor daily at the gates of their establishments; and thus in this country, by creating a mass of pauperism, have they in effect left us, on their abrupt dissolution, a legacy in the shape of the poor laws. In truth, the bounty of these establishments, and a great deal probably of the bounty of early and mediæval Christianity, was of a very indiscriminate kind, provocative of the very poverty which it relieved, and differing greatly from the manly and wise beneficence recommended by St. Paul to his converts in various passages of his Epistles; for the great Apostle certainly tempered his notions of beneficence with firmness and good sense, and may be said to have been in this matter a practical political economist, centuries before the science was discovered.

In modern states we see that poverty when, in spite of the manifold operations of Christian beneficence, it had been aggregated into a mass, has often been a fer-

tile source of difficulty to rulers, and of trouble to the community. To go no further back in modern history, we find that an aggregation of poverty was the cause of French Jacqueries, German peasant wars, Wat Tyler and Jack Cade insurrections, the risings of the peasantry in Edward VI.'s reign; and last, but greatest, of the French Revolution, well termed great, an exaggerated type of all revolutions, in which the earliest cry of the disaffected populace was '*du pain*,' while its latest sequels, in 1848, and in the Commune of 1871, were both owing, in some measure, to the same cause. During, however, the progress of that revolution, which, having been caused by want, greatly aggravated that cause, the attempt to lessen it was made under the 'Republic of the Poverties,' by the celebrated 'loi du maximum,' which fixed, under pain of death, the highest price at which bread could be sold. This law was virtually an imposition of a tax upon the producers of bread in favour of the customers, in the difference between the legal price of the commodity and the price which it would otherwise have fetched, imposing in fact a poor-tax on the 'bread-stuff' interest; but the necessary effect of the law was to check the employment of capital in the supply of grain, and, by consequence, to increase the original scarcity of food, and to cause great embarrassment to producers and distress to consumers. Hence this curious French poor law was, after a short and calamitous trial, gladly thrown aside, as a public mischief. Established in March, 1793, it was rescinded in the November of the following year.

The frequent pressure of a mass of poverty in our own national history, owing to various causes, such as

dearths, expensive foreign wars, the results of which always fall heavily on wages earners, the indiscriminate almsgiving of the monasteries, and their abrupt dissolution, the excessive conversion of arable into pasture lands, led, as is well known, to various legislative attempts at its diminution. The first English statute which can be said to deal with the question of poverty was passed in 1531. It simply enacts that 'such aged poor and impotent persons which lived by alms, as the justices of the peace of a division of the country may select, shall be authorised to beg anywhere within the limits of their jurisdiction.'

Before the passing of this Act, all of the class might beg in their respective parishes only. In the Parliament of 1534–5, at the same time with the Act for the dissolution of the smaller monasteries, a poor law Act was passed, repealing that of 1531, and with the rough high-handedness of Tudor legislation, strangely jumbling together the two principles of voluntary and compulsory relief. It ordains to the effect that persons of the class mentioned in the previous Act, coming with license to beg into any parish, '*shall* be received and kept by means of *voluntary* contributions and alms.' This Act goes on to ordain that the parochial authorities shall, under a penalty of 20*s.* a month, to be paid to the parish, compel 'sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars, and idle vagabonds having no master, to be set and kept to continual labour, so as to get their own living.' In order to provide for the expense of employing these persons, and of relieving the aforesaid impotent and aged persons, 'local authorities are to collect charitable and voluntary alms.' Then came the

Act of 1 Edward VI., which, after prohibiting the impotent poor from begging anywhere but in the place in which they were born, or in which they had lived for three years, ordains that they *shall* be provided with lodging at the cost of the parish, and 'there be relieved by the *devotion* of good people' of the parish. It has been observed that the last-mentioned statute was occasioned by the sudden dissolution of the monasteries, by the consequent cessation of the stream of almsgiving which flowed from those establishments, and by the ejection of some fifty or sixty thousand persons, inmates of them, from their abodes and livelihoods, of whom a large portion were compelled to swell the amount of destitution and vagrant mendicancy, and a considerable portion probably began, being freed from the celibate restraints of the cloister, to increase and multiply poverty and its consequences. However, five or six years afterwards, was passed the Act 5 & 6 of Edward VI. (1551), by which it is ordained that on a certain specified Sunday in every year collectors, appointed under the Act, are 'gently to ask every man and woman in the parish what they *of their charity will give* weekly towards the relief of the poor, and are to distribute weekly what they collect.' And if any one able to contribute refuses to do so, the minister and churchwardens are 'gently to exhort him;' but, if he will not be persuaded, 'the bishop of the diocese is to send for him, and induce and persuade him by charitable ways and means,' 'and so, according to his discretion, take order for the reformation thereof.' The enactments, however, of this statute were repealed in the 5th & 6th of Philip and Mary. The compulsory principle which, as we have seen, is shadowed in the

'shall be kept by voluntary alms, &c.,' of the statute of 1535, appears in a more substantial form in the next statute for the relief of the poor, the Act of the 5th of Elizabeth, 1562-3. After confirming the before-mentioned statute of the 22nd of Henry VIII. (1535) and of the 5th & 6th of Edward VI., this Act of Elizabeth goes on to enact, 'that, if any person shall obstinately refuse to give weekly to the relief of the poor (the impotent, feeble and lame, which are the poor in very deed), according to his abilities,' then the bishop or ordinary of the diocese shall have power to *bind him* to appear at the next sessions. If he refuses to be so bound, the bishop is authorized to commit him to prison, there to remain till he shall have become bound, as aforesaid; and when he does appear at the sessions, if he will not be persuaded by the justices, it shall be lawful for them, together with the churchwardens of the recusant's parish, to 'cess, tax and limit him what sum he shall pay weekly towards the relief of the poor.' If he refuses to pay, the justices are *to imprison him* till he has paid the appointed sum. This Act may be regarded as the first absolutely compulsory piece of legislation for the relief of the poor, which had previously been chiefly a work of Christian charity. Heavy penalties are also by this Act of Elizabeth imposed on authorities failing to execute the part assigned to them by it. Further, this Act directs justices to license impotent folk, whom their parishes '*cannot*' relieve, to beg within a certain limit. This statute, with its 'cannot,' of which the interpretation may easily be imagined, continued in force for nine years, at the end of which (1572) another Act was passed repealing it, and replacing it by the following

provisions for the relief of the 'aged, impotent, and poor people,' viz., that the justices shall, 'by their good discretion, tax the inhabitants of the several divisions of a county to a weekly contribution, for the relief of the said poor people;' that anyone refusing such contribution shall be committed to prison till he consent to make it. And when such contributions '*cannot presently be had*,'—which would often be the case—the said poor are authorized, with the license of the justices of the quorum, to beg in other places named by the justices; and if the inhabitants of these places refuse to relieve these beggars as the justices approve, the latter are to *compel* the recusant inhabitants, by such pains and penalties as they shall think fit to impose, to relieve them! With regard to the other class, that of able-bodied vagrants, this Act provides that the justices, out of the surplus of the aforesaid contributions, 'shall set them to work to get their livings.' On this strange Act it is observed that by it a discretionary power is granted to the justices of the peace to tax every person dwelling in their division for the relief of the poor, and for the setting to work of able-bodied vagrants. After this Act of the 14th Elizabeth comes that of the 18th of her reign, 1575, explaining and adding to the former Act. This Act of 1575 is remarkable, as containing a new and startling principle in English pauper legislation, the principle that the State shall find labour for all members of the community who ostensibly cannot find it for themselves. To carry out this principle it enacts that 'in every city and town a competent stock of raw materials, "hemp, flax, wool, iron, or other stuff," shall be provided, on which *all able-bodied persons*

without work or means of subsistence shall be employed.' The next Act, the 39th of Elizabeth, goes on to provide '*abiding and working houses*' for the above purpose. Then, lastly, came the famous 43rd of Elizabeth, 1602, which has formed the basis of pauper-legislation to the present day. Without entering into all its provisions, it will be enough to say that it introduces the practice of the compulsory *rating* of parishes for the relief of the impotent and aged, and for '*setting on work*' the able-bodied not otherwise employed, for apprenticing the children of the poor, and for supplying habitations for the impotent poor. Two observations shall be made with regard to this Act:—first, that it confers on any person out of employment a claim to be employed at the public cost; and second, that the judges, in interpreting and applying the Act to individual cases, have laid it down as a doctrine of law that every person in need has a right to claim maintenance from the authorities, and that this '*right*' extends even to foreigners amongst us who may happen to be in distress! In short, this 43rd of Elizabeth, with the judicial decisions founded upon it, involves these two astounding principles, that it is the business and also in the competence of a State, at all times, and in any circumstances, to employ at its cost all able-bodied persons otherwise unemployed, and to support all destitute persons, whether natives or foreigners sojourning in this country. No wonder that such a law should invite to our shores thousands of mendicant adventurers, by whom the mass of poverty and pauperism is increased amongst us. Hence, for a recent example, the children of the Italian poor are brought over by persons who hire them for mendicant

or immoral purposes, at the present time, in numbers sufficiently burdensome to have drawn the attention of the Government, and to have formed the subject of a question in Parliament, and of representations to the Italian government. The swarms of adult immigrants annually thronging into this country are notorious. In fact, the attractions which are offered by our Poor Laws to foreign mendicity and rascality must powerfully aid to realize Johnson's description of

> London—the needy villain's general home,
> The common sewer of Paris, and of Rome.

And surely a country which undertakes to support any number of idle and vicious persons, who happen to be within its territory, must expect from foreign countries a large accession to the native idleness and vice.

This statute of Elizabeth was succeeded by a series of enactments, at different intervals, restraining, or more frequently extending, the application, or misapplication, of these principles of Elizabeth's legislative invention, the effects of which went far beyond what we may believe to have been the intentions of that queen and her advisers. There was the remedial statute of George I. (1723), establishing the 'workhouse test,' refusal of the workhouse being made a bar against relief. This statute had the effect of diminishing pauperism by restricting the relief of it; but it was followed by another Act in 1769, which weakened its efficiency, and in 1782 by a statute, known as Gilbert's Act, which went far towards nullifying it, by exempting the able-bodied applicants from the necessity of

entering the workhouse, and by ordering the guardians 'to find them work near their own homes, and to make up out of the rates any deficiency in wages.' Then came, in the year 1796, an Act, passed in a double 'panic' of famine and revolution, ordaining that an allowance should be made to every labourer, in proportion to his family, whether he was employed or not. This allowance was to fluctuate with the price of flour, and each family would receive the difference between the extraordinary and the ordinary price of a quantity of flour, proportioned to the number of its inmates. Under the operation of this Act pauperism evidently made large and rapid strides, for the poor rate, which in 1783-4 had amounted to 1,912,241*l.*, reached, in 1801, no less a sum than 4,017,871*l.*

This kind of policy in dealing with the pauperized class culminated in the Act of 1815, known as East's Act, which entirely abrogated the workhouse test, exempting applicants in all cases from the necessity of entering the workhouse, and which empowered justices of the peace, at their discretion, to supersede the decisions of the overseers of the poor, and order out-door relief in any 'urgent' case in which application might be made to them. The justices proceeded to order relief on the statements of the applicants, throwing on the overseers the difficult task, if they chose to undertake it, of proving in each instance the non-urgency of the case. It need hardly be said that the prospect of expending time, money, and trouble, and of incurring the humiliation of failure (through the triumph of the pauper applicant), in proving this negative, usually deterred overseers from

making the attempt, which would have had to be repeated almost daily, and sometimes more than once in a day. Hence they let the cases of application go against themselves and the ratepayers by default; and 'relief' was granted by justices, almost as a matter of course, on the mere representation of the pauper. Thus every case came to be regarded as 'urgent.' The administration and operation of the state of law, thus established, quickly absorbed so large and so increasing a part of the public resources, and brought about so prevailing an amount of idleness, improvidence, insolence, turbulence, and vice, that in 1834—nineteen years from the passing of East's Act—it was found necessary to pass a large remedial measure in order to prevent the destruction of landed property, the diversion of capital from the cultivation of the land, and the utter demoralization and pauperization of the great mass of the population —to prevent, in short, as the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners of 1832, the virtual authors of that Act, themselves say, national ruin. Many persons now living remember the effects produced by the working of the Poor Laws before the change made in 1834. To those whose memory cannot extend so far back, the state of things in regard to pauperism and its concomitant evils will be almost incredible, except on a perusal of the fullest and most authentic account of it which is given in the Report of the Poor Law Enquiry Commission, published in the last-mentioned year. No quotations from it will suffice to give any adequate notion of the evils—material and moral—which the old Poor Law brought about. The Report, however, has become scarce, and is less known than it deserves to

be, and therefore some statements now to be quoted from it may be instructive to readers of these pages. I will premise that far more than a mere historical interest attaches to this Report, inasmuch as it shows the mischief wrought and the danger incurred through a system of relief-law to which in recent practice[1] we have been rapidly drifting back. One witness, then, whose evidence is given in the Report for 1834, says, with regard to the effect of the Poor Law on agriculture and the capital employed in it, that 'as the profits of agriculture have declined, and the capital of the farmer deteriorated, so has the state of tillage and the general cultivation of the land.'

A great quantity of land was, the Commissioners tell us, thrown out of tillage through the pressure of poor rates. In the parish of Cholesbury, in Bucks, all the land was given up by the farmers and offered to the assembled paupers, who refused it, saying 'they would rather continue under the old system.' In this parish, relief, so far from diminishing indigence, increased it to its utmost limits, insomuch that the rector of the parish, the Rev. H. Jeston, whose whole living had been absorbed by pauperism, relates that, 'the rates

[1] With regard to this celebrated Report of 1834—the fruitful result of the labours of the Poor Law Enquiry Commission appointed in 1832—the present writer would express his opinion that the volume, together with the evidence appended, deserves to be read by everyone who wishes to learn the manner in which a law of compulsory relief affects the material and social condition of the poorer classes, and the interests of the owners of property. In the remarks of the Commissioners he will find the most enlightened views of the philosophy of poverty, and of the means for its retrenchment and mitigation, and a full account of the empirical treatment which has been applied to it in our past legislation.

having swallowed up the rents, the parish officers threw up their books, and the poor, left without any means of maintenance, assembled,' says the rector, 'at my door, whilst I was in bed, and applied to me for relief and food.' The same gentleman continues, in his evidence :—'My income, being under 160*l.* a year, rendered my means of relief small; but I commenced supporting them by daily allowances of bread, meat, and potatoes. In the meantime, I succeeded in obtaining a "rate in aid" for 50*l.* from Drayton, an adjoining parish. . . The present state of the parish is this—the land almost wholly abandoned (sixteen acres only, including cottage gardens, being now in cultivation); the poor thrown only on the rates, and set to work upon the roads and gravel-pits, and paid for this unprofitable labour at the expense of another parish.' The reverend gentleman concludes his communication to the Commissioners by recommending that the whole acreage of the parish should be exclusively allotted to able-bodied paupers.[1]

This instance from the Report of 1834 shows not only the capacity of Poor Law relief to absorb the property of landowners, and its potency to banish capital from the cultivation of the land, but its effect also in aggravating the misery, in the supposed 'relief' of which this property is absorbed. The case of Cholesbury is doubtless an extreme case; but an extreme case is the crucial test of a principle, and the clearest proof of its inherent tendencies.

From the same store-house of facts some further illustrations shall be given of the effect which the Poor Law system had upon landed property, and upon the

[1] Report for 1834, p. 64, and Extracts from Evidence, p. 86.

employment of capital in the cultivation of the land. I quote from the evidence of Mr. Majendie, an Assistant Commissioner, given at page 65 of the Report:—'In Lenham, Kent (at the time of his visit), some of the land was out of cultivation. A large estate has been several years in the hands of the *proprietor*, and a farm of 420 acres of good land, tithe free and well situated, had just been thrown up by the tenant, the poor-rate on it amounting to 300*l.* a year.'

'In another place, a farm well situated, of average quality, was in vain offered at 5*s.* an acre, not from objection to the quality of the land, but because men of capital will not connect themselves with a parish in which the poor-rates would keep them in a constant state of vexation and anxiety. In Ardingley, those farmers who have any capital left withdraw from the parish as soon as the leases expire. One of them admitted to him (Mr. Majendie) "that it was out of the power of the landlord to relieve them."'

Again, it is given in evidence to the Commissioners[1] that 'the owner of a farm at Granden, in Cambridgeshire, could not get a tenant even at 5*s.* an acre, and that Downing College, which has a property of 5,000 acres in the same county, found it impossible, notwithstanding the lowering the rents to an extreme point, to obtain men of substance for tenants. Several farms of considerable extent have changed hands twice within the last five years, from insolvency of the tenants, in some instances, in others, from terror at the prospect.' In the same county, one of the Assistant Commissioners 'found that at Soham a total absorption of the value of

[1] Report, p. 65.

the land in twelve or fourteen years was anticipated.' Another of the Commissioners states that 'at Great Shelford, in the same county, the same result was expected to take place in ten years.' Mr. Pilkington, another Assistant Commissioner, states that 'at Hinckley, in Leicestershire, he found the poor-rate exceeding 1*l.* an acre, and a general opinion that the day is not far distant when rent must cease altogether.' On visiting Wigston Magna, in the same year—November 1832—he was informed 'that the value of property had fallen one-half since 1820, and was not saleable even at that reduction.' 'It does not appear, indeed,' he adds, 'that it ought to have sold for more than two or three years' purchase, the net rental not amounting to 4,000*l.* a year, and the poor-rate expenditure growing at the rate of 1,000*l.* increase in a single year.' And on his return to that neighbourhood three months after, the statement made to him was that 'property in land was gone; that even the rates could not be collected without regular summons and judicial sales; and that the present system must ensure, and very shortly, the total ruin of every individual of any property in the parish.' 'We cannot wonder,' observe the Commissioners, 'after this, at the statement of an eminent solicitor at Loughborough, that it is now (1834) scarcely possible to effect a sale of property in that neighbourhood at any price.' One witness states to the Commissioners, regarding a particular parish, that 'if some material change does not very soon take place, the time is not far distant when the whole rents will be absorbed in the poor-rates.' Another says of his parish, 'much land in the hands of proprietors wanting tenants;' another, that 'in an

adjoining parish the owners of untenanted farms who are not farmers fear to occupy, and prefer the loss of rent to the unlimited expense in poor-rate, which would overwhelm the profits of one not perfectly experienced in farming and the parochial concerns it involves.' Another witness on this point states that 'in the neighbourhood of Aylesbury there were forty-two farms untenanted at Michaelmas last (1832). Most of these are still in the proprietors' hands, and on some no acts of husbandry have been done since in order to avoid the payment of poor-rate. I attribute these circumstances principally to the operation of the Poor Laws.'[1] The Commissioners themselves say on this subject:—'We have received from purely agricultural districts general complaints of the decrease of the capital of the farmer.'[2] The instances now cited are but a few specimens of the evidence which this Report gives of the effect of the Poor Laws in depreciating landed property, and in driving away capital from its employment in the cultivation of the soil.

Of the heavy expenditure, worse than profitless, to which ratepayers in agricultural districts were subjected by these laws, a striking specimen is given in the instance of a parish in Kent, called Ewhurst. In this parish, though the quantity of employment was commensurate with the number of able-bodied men, and wages were high for those times, being 13*s.* 6*d.* a week, the poor-rates in 1831 were 27*s.* a head on the whole population. There were in fact only 1,200 inhabitants, while the annual amount of poor-rates was 1,630*l.*! The effect of this expenditure, we may mention cursorily,

[1] Report of 1834, pp. 65, 66. [2] Page 352 of Report.

in destroying all the energy of self-help, may be inferred from the fact, stated in the Report, that 'the rector, from benevolent motives, offered to the labourers small allotments at a low rent, but was able thus to let three acres only, and his offer of nine acres more was rejected!' In another parish—Benenden—the annual expenditure on the paupers was 20*s.* a head on the whole population.[1]

Nor were the adverse effects of poor laws on property and capital by any means confined to agricultural districts. In towns where large masses of pauperism had aggregated, the extent to which these laws operated to the depression of trade and the depreciation of house-property, may be gathered from the evidence in the Report, from which the following examples shall be given:—A tradesman of Bethnal Green says, 'My trade is declining; so is the trade of my neighbours. Respectable people are leaving the place, which makes it still worse. Rents are declining, and ruin impending.' Another inhabitant of the same pauperized locality gives similar evidence:—'Property,' says he, 'is now giving way under the pressure of pauperism. There are 800 empty houses in the parish.'[2]

Such are necessarily but a few, though some of the more salient, specimens, extracted from a lengthy Report, with evidence appended to it, in illustration of the enormous deterioriation of property and the ruinous local taxation in which the Poor Law, now amended, but identical in principle and to a considerable degree in administration, resulted, up to the year 1834.

A few references to this Report of the Poor Law

[1] Report of 1834, p. 356. [2] Report, pp. 293 294.

Enquiry Commission of 1832 will be sufficient to show the influence which the Poor Laws exerted on the qualities, sentiments, and morals of the population. On the first two points, take the following statement of the Commissioners:—'Unhappily, the evidence shows that these virtues [skill, honesty, and diligence] are rapidly wearing out, but that their place is assumed by the opposite vices; and that the very labourers among whom the farmer has to live, and on whose affections as friends he ought to depend, are becoming not merely idle and ignorant and dishonest, but positively hostile; not merely unfit for his service and indifferent to his welfare, but positively hostile.' One witness on this point says, 'The certain provision under the Poor Laws has generated a spirit of independence which renders them [the labourers] indifferent to please their employers.'[1] Of the deterioration in point of what are specially called morals, induced by this system, as shown in the Report, it is difficult to speak without shocking the feelings of readers. Let it suffice to say that, through the allowances made for the support of illegitimate children, this country attained a bad pre-eminence in the number of such offspring; that, as the Report states, a woman who had borne a number of children before marriage, became an object of preference in marriage, on account of the allowances which she received from the parish for their maintenance; and that married women of this class would point out, without feelings of shame, which of her children were born in wedlock, and which were not.[2] The Report in

[1] Supplement of Report of 1834, p. 8.

[2] See page 97 of the Report.

question leaves no room for doubt about the tendency of compulsory relief to destroy one of the chief safeguards of morality in this particular, by relieving the mothers from the burden of maintaining their illegitimate offspring. For, as the Commissioners, with evident truth, remark on this point, 'If a woman be ill-disposed, the prospect of throwing her illegitimate offspring on the parish adds to the force of her temptations; if she be well-disposed, this prospect removes the prop which should support her self-control.'[1]

With regard to the general effect of these laws on the character and conduct of the poorer classes, the evidence given in this Report goes to prove the facts that such a resource as parish relief in view 'prevents the labourers' exertions and the young men from laying by anything for the *future*;' that it encourages early marriages, and thus induces pauperism in the next generation; that it is inimical to moral purity; and that it 'leads to the consumption of wages in excessive drink and other forms of self-indulgence.' 'It appears,' say the Commissioners, 'to the pauper that Government has undertaken to repeal in his favour the ordinary laws of nature; to enact that the children shall not suffer for the misconduct of their parents, the wife for that of her husband, the husband for that of the wife; that no one shall lose the means of comfortable subsistence, whatever be his indolence, prodigality, or vice; in short, that the penalty which, after all, must be paid by *some one* for idleness and improvidence, is to fall, not on the guilty party or on his family, but on the proprietors of lands and houses encumbered by his settlement.' They proceed to characterise the Poor

[1] Report, p. 350.

Law as 'a system which aims its allurements at all the weakest parts of our nature, which offers marriage to the young, security to the anxious, ease to the lazy, and impunity to the profligate.'[1]

Nor did the characters of the children of the poorer classes escape from the baneful effects of the older Poor Law system; for the Commissioners ascribe to its operation a large and constant increase of 'the stock of juvenile delinquents, already more numerous than in any other European country.'[2]

The Commissioners set forth their view of the general effects of the Poor Law system in language no less positive than the following:—'If twice the number of millions (collected for the poor-rate) were annually thrown into the sea, we might still be a moral, industrious, and flourishing nation. But if the whole of our poor-rates could be raised without inconvenience; if they were paid to us, for instance, as a tribute by foreigners, and were still applied as they are now applied, no excellence in our laws and institutions in other respects could save us from ultimate ruin.' Thus do the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners, in their Report of 1834, perorate, in accordance with the abundant evidence which came before them. Such, as they assert, was the tendency of the old Poor Law, in regard to national wealth, and to the moral and material interests of the great mass of the population. The Poor Law Amendment Act, however, of 1834, framed chiefly on their Report, embodies, though with some modifications, the general principle of the old law, and through certain of its provisions has opened a way by which, as

[1] Report, p. 59. [2] Report, p. 339.

will be shown, we have been rapidly drifting back to the state of things which existed under that law. The same practice has come to prevail again as under that law—the practice of relieving able-bodied paupers, as well as the sick and infirm, at their own homes. By the amended law maintenance in the Union-house was intended to be the rule, out-door relief the rare exception; but by a laxity, almost inevitable, in the interpretation of its letter, the intention of this law has been reversed, insomuch as that out-relief has become the rule, and is now to in-door maintenance in the proportion of nearly five to one on the average of the kingdom.[1] We have still in operation a system of law which encourages improvidence, discourages provident economy, makes the wages-receiver unduly independent of the wages-payer, and is hostile to morality and to temperate habits. Still the man who might find employment, if he felt that it were necessary to his subsistence, or the man who is reduced to want by self-indulgence or by misconduct towards his employer, can tax the public for his support. Still the woman who has parted with her virtue can cast upon the ratepayers the burden of maintaining her offspring. Still men who are in receipt of permanent parish relief, on account of infirmity or old age, marry, with the result that 'child after child is born and reared in a state of pauperism, and frequently to an inheritance of disease.'[2] Still is early

[1] It appears by the Returns that the mean number of paupers in England for the year ending Lady Day, 1874, was, out-door, 683,739 persons, in-door, 143,707; this being in the ratio of $4\frac{108911}{143707}$: 1.

[2] See on this point the Report of Mr. Sendal, a Local Government Board Inspector, for 1873–4, pp. 85, 86. This gentleman mentions, for instance, seventeen cases of male *paupers* between sixty and eighty

and improvident marriage encouraged by the law. Still the husband can, by deserting his wife and children, throw their maintenance upon the public. Such is the recognised operation of the present, as of the unamended, law; of the abuses and the frauds practised under the present law, notice will be taken in the succeeding pages. For, by its exceptional clauses, permitting out-relief in certain cases, the present Poor Law has left a loophole through which the worst evils of pauperism have been making their way back into the social system. How much these evils, in point of cost at least, have returned upon us, may be judged from the following statement of comparative expenditure on pauperism in 1834, the last year during which the unamended Poor Law was in force, and at two subsequent periods. In 1834 the expenditure in poor relief was at the rate of 8*s.* 9½*d.* per head of the population; in 1837, three years after the amended law came into operation, the rate was reduced to 5*s.* 5*d.* per head of the population; in 1872 the rate per head had risen to within a half-penny of 7*s.*

In the pages to follow it is proposed to consider our system of dealing with poverty, and the effects which that system has upon the condition of the poor themselves, both in material and moral respects, upon the classes at whose expense it is maintained, and upon the national wealth; and to make suggestions for its gradual abolition, with accompanying remedial measures.

years of age 'who are the husbands of comparatively young wives, and the fathers of quite young children.' He calculates that there is a total of 5,500 such cases—'families permanently lapsed into pauperism, in which children are being born and reared at the expense of the rates—forcing-beds of pauperism.'

SECTION II.

TERMS: 'LABOURING' AND 'WORKING' CLASSES.

BEFORE proceeding with this treatise the writer will call attention to the common, but incorrect and fallacious limitation of the terms, 'working classes,' 'labouring classes,' 'operatives,' and the like. The exclusive application of such terms to those, whose work is of a physical kind, unintentionally involves the assertion, often openly made by men of this class, that these are the only workers: that they are the 'bees,' all others the 'drones,' of the social hive. Let us, by the way, imagine, but for a moment, the existence of a commonwealth in which there were no other workers, no ministers of religion, no medical men, no lawyers, no persons devoted to literature or science, no statesmen, no artists, no traders even; in short, none whose special work is with the mind!

It need scarcely be remarked that to all persons actively engaged in the divers, often severe, occupations of mind, a kind of injustice is done in this exclusive application of the epithets 'working' and 'labouring' to those whose work and labour is chiefly with the physical faculties. But the reason why exception is now

taken to the partial use of these terms is that it unconsciously gives rise to much of the misplaced and exaggerated sentiment in vogue with regard to the condition, the supposed merits, claims, and sufferings of the class to whom the terms are appropriated, seems to furnish a plea for a special consideration of them, to the disadvantage of the rest of the community, and for what Professor Fawcett calls in this case 'class legislation,' as exclusively favouring the particular class whose labours are with the physical, not the mental faculties, and who in a large number of instances are in a better position for prudent saving than those who work with their minds. This fallacy, lying hid under the common employment of the terms 'working' and 'labouring' classes, is akin to the fallacy involved in the limitation of the word 'people' to denote one class alone of the whole nation; and in the noted misuse of the term 'poor' to include even those who, enjoying health and strength, are living by the well-paid labour of their hands. In the pages following it is intended, in designating that portion of the population who subsist by labour of this kind, to employ terms free from the surmise of an invidious antithesis, and of a prejudice in favour of their compulsory maintenance in the adverse contingencies of life.

SECTION III.

MATERIAL MISCHIEF TO THE HAND-WORKING CLASSES.

If a traveller were to report the discovery of an island in the Pacific, where it was expressly ordained by law that, let any man or woman be as idle, or as improvident, or as disorderly, or as vicious as he or she pleased to be, such person could claim public support, either the traveller's veracity would be called in question, or the inhabitants of the island would be set down as a people of singularly perverted understandings. If, however, our traveller's tale were thus far accepted, he would easily be believed when he added that in that island the hand-working people, though in full employment, and generally well paid, usually spent the surplus of their wages in self-indulgence, and that an enormous amount of indigence and destitution was to be found there, notwithstanding their legal resource and the beneficence of many persons of the wealthier order. Yet the only difference between the law of this supposed island and the law of an existent island situated between the 58th and 60th degrees of north latitude, and at about 5 degrees of east longitude, is that the Pacific law *expressly* ordains what the law of the existent island

ordains by implication. The purport of the two laws would be the same, though it were not openly stated in both cases. Such is the Poor Law of England.

The consequences of this law to the material and social condition of the classes who live by the labour of their hands, or who, possessing no means, live by no labour, are such as might have been expected, and are evident from abundant testimony, nay, even open to common observation. How to improve this condition, which is a disgrace to the nation, and not without danger to the social order, is a problem which has exercised the brain-power of earnest philanthropists and scientific politicians. In spite of the increase of wealth, and consequently of the employment of labour, which has been witnessed of late years amongst us, these classes appear to have undergone no improvement in their circumstances or their habits. The increase of wages seems to be chiefly spent in more drinking and other self-indulgence; and the remark may be commonly heard concerning our wages-earners, that 'they are really no better off for being better paid.' The latest statistics of pauperism show no serious decrease in the number of actual paupers. The same social degradation, the same helpless and abject poverty in large masses, are to be found in the population; the same lack of self-support whenever sickness, or accident, or slackness of employment befalls them, or the helplessness of old age has overtaken them. England is the richest and most bountiful of nations, and yet is one of the most pauperized and poverty-stricken of nations within the whole pale of civilization.

'Pourquoi,' writes an intelligent Frenchman, 'dans

l'Angleterre si riche y-a-t-il tant de pauvres?' And M. Alphonse Karr, in reference to our pauperism, speaks of 'le triste tableau de l'Angleterre.' The late M. Thiers himself, speaking not long since in the National Assembly, described the same thing as 'la plaie la plus dévorante de l'Angleterre.'

In order to reduce this mass of poverty, and elevate these classes in material, moral and social respects, various methods are tried. We have 'total abstinence' societies, temperance societies, laws to regulate the sale of liquors, savings'-banks, increased means of education and of enlightenment, free schools, orphan asylums, 'refuges,' training ships for out-cast boys, dispensaries, a countless number of hospitals for every kind of disease or physical infirmity, convalescent 'homes,' almshouses, soup-kitchens, schools of cookery, vast sums spent in individual alms, organization of charity, better dwellings, 'wholesome houses' provided, or in course of being provided, 'penny readings,' free libraries, museums, reading-rooms, Science and Art class rooms, 'Working Men's Clubs,' at the public expense. How far all these and other methods have succeeded in elevating to any sensible degree the condition of the classes for whose benefit they were intended, must be but too evident to the observer.

Why have all these benevolent methods produced so little improvement as is generally known and acknowledged? Simply because they do not touch the root of the evil. What, then, is the root? Everyone who has considered the subject knows it, whatever method he may propose for its eradication. Every such person knows that the root of the evil in the present

condition of the population is their conspicuous *improvidence.* In this habit they notoriously exceed the populations of all other civilised countries; nay, so far they have even returned to that state of barbarism in which men, according to a well-known description[1]—'Nec componere opes nôrant, nec parcere parto'—'had no notion of laying by their means, nor of husbanding their gains;' in other words, lived 'from hand to mouth.' Even among the more industrious of our wages-earners, this recklessness of future needs is widely prevalent. It is notorious that our hand-working classes mostly make it a practice to spend the whole of their wages, however ample, week by week, even though they may not be addicted to intemperance or any other vicious self-indulgence. They spend their wages weekly, as the man of realised capital usually spends each year's interest of it in the year. Bred as they are in an atmosphere of improvidence, which operates unnoticed upon their minds, they have no thought of laying by against the day of necessity. A few casual instances may impress this fact. Thus the present writer was lately told by an employer of labour in a country district, that, though most of his men were in receipt of 1*l.* 12*s.* each a week, not one of them laid by against future necessities; nay, that not unfrequently he was called upon to make advances of wages to individuals among them. One of his employés, a young man, unmarried, and living with his parents, was in receipt of 1*l.* 8*s.* a week, but turned a deaf ear to his employer's friendly advice to him, that he should make some provision for his future. The shipbuilding artificers, who once abounded on the banks

[1] Virgil, Æn. viii. v. 317.

of the Thames, were in receipt of wages so high as to maintain them in a very self-indulgent, nay, licentious, style of living; in fact, they mostly spurned the matrimonial yoke, and entered into contracts which were to last during pleasure. At last they struck for higher wages. The masters held out against the demand, and the consequence was that the great shipbuilding industry was transferred to the banks of the Clyde. Instantly there arose a cry of distress from the ex-shipbuilding multitude, and, as is usual on these occasions, a rush was made upon the rates of the locality. An earner of good wages as a bookbinder in a country town, who was unmarried, and a man of temperate habits, falling sick, applied in a week's time for parish relief! An honest, sober, and industrious man, who has occasionally been employed by the present writer, married, and with a small family, and in comfortable circumstances, avows that he makes no provision for himself or his family. The manager of a large industry —his exact words shall be quoted, to the best of the writer's recollection—stated that 'he paid the men 200*l.* a week in wages every Friday, and that he did not think he should be able the next day to collect five pounds among them all!' An instance of the notorious want of prudence in the agricultural labourers' class was given to the present writer by an experienced agriculturist, who is liberal in remunerating his men, and who, at an annual entertainment which he was giving them, made to them, with the view of encouraging their thrift, the following offer, that if any one of them chose to lay by enough from his weekly wages to buy a calf, which would cost about 20*s.*, he might feed it in his

employer's rich pasture-land for one year, at the end of which the calf could be sold at a considerable profit. The offer was accepted with all the sincerity of post-prandial applause; but in cooler moments habit regained its ascendency in the men's minds, for not one of them came forward to avail himself of the offer. The following anecdote to the same point is also authentic:—A Kentish hop-picker, just before the beginning of the season, was boasting to a shopkeeper that during it he should make ten pounds by the work of himself and his family. The shopkeeper replied, 'I suppose you will lay that by for yourself and your family in the winter.' 'Oh, no!' rejoined the hop-picker,' 'I shan't. I mean to enjoy myself with it.'—Another illustration of the deliberate improvidence of the agricultural population is furnished in the following dialogue, which actually took place between a tenant-farmer in Norfolk and an agricultural labourer, and was recently related to the present writer by the farmer's landlord. Happening to meet the labourer strolling about, the farmer came out to him with the question, 'Why don't you get some work?' The labourer answered, 'I have nothing to do.' 'How do you live?' asked the farmer. The answer of the labourer was, 'Now and then I gets a job, but I am waiting for the harvest. I shall do well at harvest.' 'But,' said the farmer, 'what shall you do after the harvest?' 'Why,' replied the labourer, 'I shall go to the poorhouse; they *must* take me in there, and I shall do very well there for the winter.' It seems a not uncommon practice with able-bodied paupers to make the workhouse their usual winter abode. So the present writer was informed by the master of a work-

house, who added that he found it convenient to put by the same workhouse clothing for the use of such men on their return in the winter! These instances which have come to the knowledge of a writer having but few opportunities of observation, may give a slight idea of the prevailing improvidence of the wages-earning classes of England. It is probable that the readers of these pages have met with similar instances. If, then, such instances which have become known to a few persons be multiplied, as with manifest truth they may be multiplied, by tens of thousands, some estimate may be formed of the extent of this habitual improvidence. The result of a wider observation in this matter was given in the Report of the 'Servants' Provident and Benevolent Society,' read at a meeting in 1849, at which H.R.H. the late Prince Consort presided. It was stated in this Report that of the domestic servants in England and Wales, whose number was computed at one million, as many as 70 per cent. on quitting service ended their days as pensioners on the parish rates or on public charities. In the course of his speech on that occasion, the Prince stated 'that in this metropolis the greater part of the inhabitants of the workhouse are domestic servants.' His Royal Highness also mentioned that during the whole time between the passing of the Deferred Annuities Act in 1833 and the time at which he was speaking, that is, during sixteen years, 'only about 600 persons had availed themselves of the provisions'[1] of this 'wise and benevolent measure,' as the Prince Consort termed it, which was expressly intended for the benefit of a class in which the great majority of wages-earners,

[1] Martin's 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. ii.

including domestic servants, are comprised. The comparative failure of this Act will seem strange, when we call to mind the high wages which upper servants often receive, in contrast with the salaries of many clergymen, subalterns in the army or navy, and clerks in Government offices or in large mercantile establishments. As a retired wages-earner, who himself (rare example!) has by honest industry and thrift secured a sufficient independence, observed of the hand-working class, in rough but pointed language, 'They work like horses, but spend their money like asses!' 'Even skill and industry,' remarks a contemporary writer, 'are regarded by them as warrants for immediate self-indulgence, rather than as means for securing ultimate independence.' With this improvidence at work, we need not wonder that all the benevolent schemes above mentioned fail to reduce to any sensible degree the existing amount of abject poverty, or to raise the social condition of the classes in question. 'Nothing,' says an eminent authority on pauperism, 'can permanently better the condition of the working classes but an increase of *prudence*.' Nay, it may be questioned whether, in existing circumstances, many of these schemes for bettering their condition have not in effect aided in impoverishing and demoralising them, by multiplying the resources of improvidence.

To what cause, then, is this incomparable improvidence of our population to be ascribed? We English are not a less intelligent, less thoughtful, less practical people than any other civilized nation. The cause must be somewhere in our peculiar institutions; and in what part of these is it to be sought but in a Poor Law

system to which, in the amount and certainty of the relief which it offers to the destitute improvident, no parallel can be found elsewhere? The testimony of experts to the fact that our Poor Laws are the cause of this enormous improvidence is too bulky to be given in the mass, while mere quotation would seem only to weaken its cogency. Anyone who may doubt whether or no the cause of it lies in our Poor Law system may advantageously consult the Reports of our Poor Law Commissioners and Inspectors, Reports of Poor Law Conferences, the writings of all our great masters of political economy, and the statements of persons experienced in the administration of these laws, or otherwise fully cognizant of their operation. Nay, without consulting all these authorities, let anyone ask himself what effect is likely to be produced on men's conduct by an exemption from all anxiety with regard to the consequences of improvident conduct. Fear, it has been said, is the mother of forecast; but all fear as to these consequences is removed by our Poor Law. How can men be expected to practise the self-denial necessary in providing against future needs, when they can depend upon a law of indiscriminate relief, a veritable Magna Charta of improvidence? 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we —— can go to the parish!' Such is the practical sentiment with a large portion of the population; for has not a 'paternal' legislation undertaken the relief of their necessities, from whatever cause or fault they may arise? Nor does our Poor Law promote improvidence simply by the temptations which it holds out to it. This law has the same effect by positively discouraging the exercise of the opposite quality

of forecast.[1] For example, if a wages-earner have, by the exercise of this quality, secured to himself an annuity for his old age, he will have no claim to parish aid in supplement of that annuity, though it be less than the parish allowance received by an aged pauper. Or, if he be known to have laid by a sum of money from his earnings, he will forfeit his claim to parochial relief, so long as his money appears to hold out, while the mere spendthrift will be supported all along by the parish. The experience in this respect of a clergyman who lately held a cure in a Western County was exactly to the point. The present writer is informed by him that, when an agricultural labourer in his parish was thought to be laying by some of the produce of his toil, he became instantly an object of suspicious observation, and the eager remark would go round, '*He has a hoard.*' If he afterwards applied to the parish, he would receive no relief till the farmers were satisfied that his 'hoard' was exhausted. Thus what is really the discharge of a man's duty to his family and to society, becomes a disqualification for the receipt of a benefit from the public. His accumulation was praiseworthy; yet if, while it lasts, he applies for relief, he commits a wrong, but a wrong to which the law has

[1] The tendency to *discourage* thrift is described by one of the representatives at the Poor Law Conference held at Leicester in the year 1875: 'Is it not the administration of the Poor Law which has created pauperism, because it has left the poor man to go on spending his earnings in beer and drink; *because he sees that those around who have been thrifty are in no better position at last than the idler and vagabond?* So long as you have that condition of things, so long will you have this extravagant system of out-door relief, bearing so heavily upon a class only just removed from those who are receiving relief. *Report of Leicester Conference*, pp. 331–2.

tempted him. Few men with such treatment in prospect would be disposed to lay by any surplus of their means for future needs.

The extent to which Poor Law discourages all provident enterprise in the class of agricultural labourers is illustrated by the following statement, made by the Speaker of the House of Commons in his capacity of landlord, as reported in a public newspaper. At the annual harvest-home on his Sussex estates, held on September 9, 1876, the right honourable gentleman thus expressed himself:—'This occasion reminds me that some years ago I made to you, the labourers on this farm, a proposal for sharing with me in the profits of my farming, while I guaranteed you against serious loss upon such investments as you might think fit to make. I am sorry that my proposal has not been more largely accepted. It was made both in your interests and my own, and the offer is still open. I can understand that there may be many reasons why my offer has not been more largely taken up. There may be those who, having no confidence in my farming, have no faith in my making a profit. . . . Again, there may be those who hold that they have not the means to take a share in my business. . . . I apprehend, however, that the main obstacle to my proposal lies much deeper, and will be found in *our present pernicious system of out-door relief.* For generations the agricultural labourer in the southern counties has been taught, by the operation of our Poor Law, to rely upon out-door relief as his pension in old age—a most evil habit, injurious to both master and man. The *effect of this system of out-door relief as now*

administered is to deter men from saving, for by so doing they sacrifice their claim to relief, destitution being a condition of relief.'[1]

Legal relief is meant for the destitute only, and with good reason; for, if the intention were to include those who have means of their own, only an arbitrary limit could be drawn, fixing the amount of means which is not to disqualify the possessor from receiving relief. If any such limit were fixed, constant questions would arise why it should not be enlarged: if it were fixed at 5*s*. a week, people would ask why it should not be raised to 6*s*. a week, and so on. There would also be offered further temptations to fraud than now exist; for many applicants would be apt to represent their means as less than they actually were. Further, if relief were granted to persons possessing means, the area of pauperism would be proportionally enlarged. The interests, too, of ratepayers are to be considered in the matter. To them, especially to those ratepayers who are but little, if at all, better off than the pauper applicants, it would be an injustice that they should be compelled to support persons possessing means of their own. There seems, therefore, to be every reason why Poor Law relief is limited to actual destitution. But as a mistaken course of action usually leads into difficulties on one side in avoiding difficulties on another side, so Poor Laws, in limiting relief to destitute persons, necessarily run into the mischief of discouraging the efforts by which destitution would be prevented. For example, if a man, in conformity with the conditions of a Provident Society, be in receipt of its

[1] *Standard*, Sept. 11, 1876.

stipulated allowance, he will forfeit, as being a possessor of some means of his own, his claim to parish relief, though the allowance from the society be inadequate to his support. But what will be the effect of his forfeiture of this claim? Clearly it will be to discourage others from belonging to a Provident Society, or, indeed, from practising prudential accumulation in any form. The members of such societies, indeed, naturally enough, protest against the law which refuses them relief, and, indeed, against all application of their allowances to the reduction of such relief, to which they are led to believe they have a 'right.' In short, they would wish to have both their 'club' allowances and legal relief at the same time. A short time ago a remonstrance was presented to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, by the members of one of these societies, against the provision of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1876, that the allowances of their society, due to members who had become lunatics under parish care, might be recovered by Boards of Guardians in payment of expenses incurred in the relief of such lunatics. The remonstrance proceeded in part on the ground that the provision in question was a discouragement to the investment of savings by means of such societies. And truly it is so; and all limitation of relief to the destitute, or, which is a corollary of this practice, all setting off of the private means of pauper applicants against the relief granted to them, must discourage persons from belonging to these societies, and from the exercise of provident caution in any way. In fact, compulsory poor relief puts its administrators into this 'cleft stick'—if they give relief to persons possessed of

private resources, they pauperize the recipients, increase the motives to fraud, raise ceaseless questions as to the amount of private resources which shall not debar the possessors from parish relief, and, lastly, commit an obvious injustice to ratepayers; if, on the other hand, they refuse relief where private means exist, or so far as they exist, discouragement is necessarily given to the provident habits by which such means would be acquired. Such is the discouragement given by Poor Laws to the exercise of forecast. Their operation in this respect was exemplified in an instance which came under the notice of the present writer, when he was taking part in the establishment of a penny savings' bank. He found that one chief obstacle to the prospective success of the bank was the unwillingness of persons, for whose benefit it was intended, to let it appear that they had money, lest their claims to relief should be prejudiced.

An instructive instance of this same discouragement was given not long since at a meeting of wages-earners in a Western County, held to consult about establishing a mutual benefit society. After some discussion of the proposal, one of them stopped the whole proceeding by pointing out to the others that they would have no claim to relief from poor-rate while they had money of their own in any form! There spoke the sentiment of a class! 'What is the use of saving? The parish must keep us,' is no uncommon language. The Poor Laws, in fact, discourage thrift, not only by raising the unthrifty to a pecuniary level with the thrifty, but by creating a fictitious notion of right to poor relief. Under the influence of this notion, a man who was sub-

sisting upon a provision of his own for age or casualty would be regarded as having lost the sums which he would otherwise have obtained from the parish. He would accordingly be liable to the reproaches of his compeers as a betrayer of the supposed rights of his class, by having forborne to claim them, or, as the phrase is, by 'saving the parish.' With the prospect of such treatment from his fellows, how many would lay by from their earnings in view of the contingencies of the future?

What Johnson says of the practical notions of his reckless and unfortunate friend Savage may be applied to too many of our people under the training of pauper laws: 'With regard to economy he appeared to think himself born to be supported by others, and dispensed from all necessity of providing for himself.' Thus that lesson of prudent precaution which the stern realities of life would teach, is lost to the wages-earner. Sickness, accident, infirmities, he regards as evils which one day may come upon him, but against which not himself but his neighbours are bound to make insurance for him. He takes these contingencies into account no more than they are taken into account by the careless child, or by the man of affluent fortunes.

A sentiment was indeed in vogue no long time since, and may still linger in a few minds, that 'society,' not people's improvident habits, is somehow answerable for distress and destitution among the humbler classes. No doubt a man who is suffering from the consequences of his own self-indulgence is glad to hear that those consequences have come upon him through the fault of other people; nor will there be much difficulty in filling

his mind with the belief that he is a victim to the ill-usage from 'society.' But what can here be meant by that word 'society'? Nothing assuredly but a number of persons scattered here and there, who happen to be in better circumstances than the sufferer himself. Yet no individual of this number called 'society' can feel himself chargeable with the consequences of another man's improvidence. And if no individual of society is chargeable with these consequences, how can society itself be chargeable? A man who has run a course of improvidence cannot lay the fault of it even on his acquaintances, be they better off or not than himself; and if he cannot make *them* the scapegoats of his own folly, it is plain that he cannot lay it upon persons who know nothing of his affairs. Yet the doctrine that 'society' is the party to blame for the prevalence of destitution and misery was the theme of Mr. Charles Kingsley's earlier novels, and pervades the writings of Dickens, the woes of whose outcasts are usually laid to the door of that convenient, but vague and often delusive abstraction, 'society.' Surely it is rather hard upon 'society' to be charged not only with the maintenance of the destitute, but also with the causes of their destitution! People, when they are suffering through their own fault—nay, even from misfortune—are much disposed to charge their sufferings on some other party, especially if they can charge them on an abstraction, because in that case there is no one who can appropriate the charge and convict its falsehood. 'Society,' or the 'world,' or the 'community,' or the oft-used but unknown quantity 'they,' are the accused parties in this case—accused not only by the sufferers, but by their senti-

mental advocates also. These abstractions are so elusive and slippery that it is difficult to grapple with them in argument, and may be compared to those Hindoo 'dacoits,' or robbers, who, being without clothes or hair, and oiled all over, present nothing on which their detectors can lay hold.

Nor is social sentimentalism the only teaching by which our multitudinous indigence has been ascribed to a cause other than the past improvidence of the indigents. It has by some been ascribed to 'misrule and oppression,' and thus a stimulating flattery has been administered, which at the same time both excuses misconduct and inspires disaffection.

Altogether, the great amount of indigence in this wealthiest and, it may be added, most charitable of countries can be ascribed to no other adequate cause than the singular improvidence which prevails in it, and which, according to patent fact and authentic testimony, is owing to the operation of our Poor Law system. In the few instances in which indigence is not owing to improvident conduct, it is from misfortune, for which neither 'society' nor the kindred abstractions, nor 'misrule and oppression,' are any more to be blamed than are the sufferers themselves.

An opportunity seems to be given for considering the important subject of our Poor Law system and its effects, now that wages have risen to a higher level throughout the country, that the demand for labour is increased, and an agitation is going on for still higher wages. A time of raised wages and of abundant employment seems the fittest time for questioning the expediency and propriety of still exempting the wages-

earning portion of the community from the necessity of forethought for their own maintenance. Further, their demand that wages should still be raised brings into question the reasonableness of their demand still to be maintained out of work by poor-rates, which are a species of tax upon the employers as well as upon other ratepayers. Wages-earners appeal to the natural rights of labour, and profess to be advancing a manly assertion of those rights. They, or their champions for them, revert to the elementary principles of the contract between capital and labour, and treat it as a purely commercial transaction. Be it so. But let them remember that other people also have their natural rights. Let not the wages-earners be so blinded by self-interest as to insist that the claims of every other class shall yield to theirs. If the earners of wages have a right to demand the highest price for their labours, the payers of wages have also a right to demand that they shall not be compelled to support any persons gratuitously. Let not the earners of wages expect to have the advantages of two different relations, the commercial, and the paternal or eleemosynary. Such an expectation would be contrary to common sense, and to all notions of just dealing between different classes of men. In short but homely phrase, the wages-earner cannot justly expect to 'have his bread buttered on both sides.' If wages were left to be regulated wholly by an adjustment between the wants of the wages-giver and the wants of the wages-taker, with no element like that of poor-rates or other taxation to complicate the transaction, wages would naturally be the higher.

Let us observe, for example, the effect wrought by Poor Laws on the wages of artisans, artificers, and

mechanics. A master invests a certain amount of capital in an industry, but before he makes his profit there must be deducted from his returns the following out-goings:—Taxes of all kinds, including poor-rates; the rent of his business premises; the interest on the part of his capital expended on his 'plant;' and wages to a certain number of *employés*. Now it is evident that the amount of his returns, which he can expend in wages, must be regulated by the amount of his other out-goings. Hence it follows that, as his out-going in poor-rates is greater, he must pay less in wages; in other words, the wages which he pays must be lower in proportion to the amount which he pays in these rates.

Agricultural labourers, again, cannot fairly expect that their wages should be as high as they might be if there were no poor-rates, since land, out of which both their wages and these rates are paid, can only bear a certain amount of charges, and has to remunerate three parties—the owner, the occupier, and the labourers upon it. Now the owner, on the average, obtains no greater interest on the value of his land than from 2 to 3 per cent., that is, not more than he could obtain by investment in the public funds. The occupier makes no more than the ordinary mercantile profit on the capital and skill which he employs on agriculture; indeed, it would seem that his gains are less than those of successful trade, for seldom in comparison is a rich farmer to be found, and seldom in probates of wills is the estate of a farmer 'sworn under' those tempting amounts for which the estates of merchants and other traders weekly figure in the newspapers. There remains a third portion of the proceeds of land, and from this portion come wages

and poor-rates. If, therefore, the landowner is to have his moderate interest, and the occupier his fair profit, as aforesaid, all that is paid from the land in poor-rates will be in diminution of what is paid in wages. What is plus in rates will be minus in wages. It is, in fact, in great measure the pressure of poor-rates that keeps down the rate of agricultural wages; were there no poor-rates, wages (other things being equal) would be the higher. Whenever poor-rates have been heaviest, wages, except from some peculiar or temporary cause, have been low.

The same will be the effect of poor-rates upon all wages. 'It is certain,' says Mr. Longley, the Poor Law Inspector, speaking in reference to wages in general, 'that all such relief must keep down wages.' From the evidence of the overseer in a London parish, it appears that 'masters concealed the real amount of wages, lest if they caused the parish to reduce the men's allowances, they should have to pay higher wages.' A striking testimony to the tendency of poor-rates to keep down wages is given in the Report of the Local Government Board, for 1874, relating to the effect of 'relief in aid of earnings,' a constant practice under the Poor Law. This practice exposes the independent workers in handicrafts to an unfair competition in the labour-market with those who, deriving part of their support from the poor-rate, can afford to sell their labour at a lower price than that which independent workers could otherwise obtain. It has truly been observed by Mr. Longley 'that a man or woman who gets two shillings a week [from the poor-rates] can afford to sell their labour for less than one who gets no relief. The rate of wages for

female labour is undoubtedly seriously affected in London by out-relief.'[1] Another gentleman, well informed on the Poor Law and its administration, thus expresses himself on the practice of relief in aid of wages and earnings, and on the tendency generally of out-relief, in this as in other ways, to reduce the rate of wages: 'There is one point,' says he, 'that has not been touched, and that is the tendency to give out-door relief in aid of wages. Some two or three years ago it was not an uncommon practice in some Unions to give such relief, and I have known cases in which a man, declared by the farmer who employed him to be not able-bodied, had three shillings a week from the Union to supplement the wages paid by his employer. But there is another case which is common—relief given in aid of earnings, of which I will give you an illustration. Take the case of a small agricultural village in which there is work enough in the charing and washing way for four women. Supposing you had in that village five women whose occupation was of that kind, those five would be unable to obtain a living because there was only work enough for four. Well, they apply to the guardians. What do the guardians do? In many instances the Board gives to the five women—to supplement their earnings—perhaps sixpence a week and a loaf. What is the consequence? It reduces the rate of wages for that kind of work, because of course these women, under the circumstances, can afford to work for the farmers in charing and washing at a cheaper rate than they otherwise could. Then of course the employers, knowing that these women have something from the

[1] Report of Poor Law Conferences for 1875, p. 66.

rates, do not give adequate remuneration for the work. What is to be done in this case? Offer these women "the House." Perhaps one of them will take it, or seek work elsewhere. In this way you possibly make one pauper, but you do not interfere in an artificial way with the law which regulates wages; you do not interfere with the labour-market in any way; but in the other case you destroy the independence of five people; you make five paupers, and you injudiciously affect the labour-market in the reduction of wages. Still further, the indiscriminate administration of out-door relief has another very bad effect on wages, but in a somewhat different and indirect way: that is, in the distribution of the people. I mean that it interferes with the free migration of people from place to place, and tends to congest the labouring population in those districts where labour is plentiful and therefore cheap, and restrains them from going to those places where labour is scarce and dear.'[1]

That relief given under the Poor Law is often, directly or indirectly, relief in aid of wages, and, therefore, a cause of lowered wages, may be seen from the following instructive extract from the Report of Mr. Wodehouse, a Poor Law Inspector, for 1871, at pages 97, 98, 99:—'It is certain that under such a system [that of prodigal out-door relief] relief will be given, directly or indirectly, in aid of wages; it is equally certain that all such relief must have the effect of keeping wages low. Some distinction may, I think, be drawn between relief in aid of earnings and relief in

[1] Speeches delivered at the First Annual Poor Law Conference for the North Midland District, at Leicester, in November, 1875, by the Rev. J. F. Halford, Secretary to the Conference.

aid of wages. Relief in aid of earnings is clearly inseparable from a system of out-door relief. . . . Relief in aid of the earnings of widows and aged persons is relief given to supplement an income derived from employment obtained at irregular intervals, and remunerated at a variable rate; whereas the relief formerly given in aid of wages was given to persons who were in regular employment, and were paid at a comparatively fixed rate. Of the former class of relief, it may at least be said that it does not tend so directly to keep down the rate of wages as the latter, although it cannot be doubted that it has a tendency in that direction by encouraging the employment, at reduced wages, of old and infirm men, and in some cases of women and children, upon work which would otherwise be performed by able-bodied labourers. A class of cases, lying half-way between the two which I have mentioned, is that of cripples, to whom some employer of labour may have given constant employment at a rate of wages reduced, in consequence of their infirmity, to so low a point, that they are obliged to apply for parish assistance. The simple question to be decided in such cases is, What portion of the cripple's maintenance ought to be provided out of the pockets of his employer, and what portion should fall upon the rates? If the guardians are not careful to see that the cripple receives an amount of remuneration fairly proportionate to the value of the work which he is able to perform, any relief that they may allow will be relief in aid of the wages of the employers, who, in many cases, it is to be feared, gets the best of the bargain. In some Unions the line which I have attempted to draw

between relief in aid of earnings and relief in aid of wages was clearly overstepped. Thus in some cases where a widower has a large family, some of the children are taken into the workhouse, although the father is in constant work and in receipt of regular wages. At Stratton, I was told that relief was given "to some who were at regular employment, such as men at work on the roads, or at reduced wages." At Axminster, on the day of my visit, a labourer with six children, whose wife had been sent by the guardians to a hospital, and who was himself in regular employment and receiving the ordinary wages of the district, applied for relief on the ground that he could not pay anyone to look after his children. The board granted him 1*s.* 6*d.* a week. The relief given was undoubtedly relief in aid of wages.'

The tendency of poor relief to reduce wages is clear from another point of view. We have seen its tendency to prevent savings. How it thereby tends also to reduce wages is well stated in the following extract:— 'Saving acts as a barrier between the labourer and that urgent and immediate necessity which gives such an advantage to the employer on the question of wages. Obviously the more improvident they are as a class, the less able will they be to hold their own in the labour market. The labourer having nothing whatever to fall back upon, must take, not what he asks, not what he is worth, but what he can get. His powers to regulate his wages will be in inverse proportion to his necessity.'[1] Thus, then, in checking savings, and so

[1] From Paper read by Rev. W. Berry, p. 403 of Report of Poor Law Conference for 1875.

placing the labourer more at the mercy of the employer in regard to terms, poor relief tends to reduce wages.

The fact that wages are lowered by poor-rates is no secret to employers of labour, for it is in evidence that in numerous instances they have favoured parish relief for that very reason. They naturally perceived that but for this relief they would have had to give higher wages; hence they have in a great multitude of cases favoured the granting of it. And we find that the granting of this relief, with the view of giving lower wages, not only prevailed under the unamended Poor Law, but has been practised to a considerable degree under the less favouring conditions of the amended law. Under the 'old,' but not quite obsolete state of the law, we may judge how far it prevailed, from the following evidence extracted from the Report of 1834 of the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners, evidence which is fruitful in warnings to us even in present circumstances. Thus at page 59 of this Report we find the following statement:—'The employers of paupers are attached to a system which enables them to dismiss their labourers according to their daily or hourly want of them, to reduce wages to the minimum, or even below the minimum, of what will support an unmarried man, and to throw upon others the payment of a part—frequently the greater part, and sometimes almost the whole—of the wages actually received by these labourers. Many of our correspondents from rural districts have replied to our question, as to the effects of prohibiting allowance to those employed by individuals, that "such an enactment would produce a rate of wages which would be ruinous to the farmers"—that "the effect would be to

prevent the tithe-owners and those who employ few labourers from paying their fair proportion of the wages of the parish!"' I may here remark, in passing, that this direct employment of rates to supplement and, therefore, to lower, wages proper, which has prevailed under the unaltered Poor Law, is by no means unknown under the altered law. In confirmation of this remark shall be quoted the recent testimony of the chairman of a board of guardians, given at a Poor Law Conference:—'Very often,' says this gentleman, 'farmers are interested in supplementing the wages of labourers. There is a kind of feeling that by out-door relief a labourer who is disabled from work can be kept on out of the house, and so, after a time, resume his employment. In that way there is a temptation to farmers to give out-door relief.'[1] Even in manufacturing districts this practice of directly supplementing low wages by Poor Law relief seems to be practised; for we find in the recent Report of a Poor Law Inspector that the mill-owners in a certain town, having placed their 'hands' on short time, addressed a requisition to the guardians to make up the remainder of the men's wages from the poor-rates! It may also be mentioned on this point, and in reference to present usage, that, though the old 'relief in aid of wages' has chiefly ceased under the Act of 1834, there is a practice in force not very unlike it—relief in aid of earnings—to which reference has already been made. The case is not uncommon of persons who presumably can only earn by their work a small weekly sum, insufficient for their support, and

[1] Speech of the Rev. Mr. Moore, chairman of the Hursley Union, at the Poor Law Conference held at Reading, Oct. 31, 1876.

to whom the difference between that sum and the sum which would maintain them is made up out of rates. The effect of this practice often is that the employers give, and the *employés* are content to receive, payment less than the value of the work done, each party expecting that the parish will subsidize the payment sufficiently for the maintenance of the *employés*. The result is not only that 'the parish gets the worst of the bargain,' but that the wages paid are manifestly reduced in proportion to the relief to be given. Indeed, not only are the wages of these *employés* reduced, but the rate of wages also in the district is reduced, and of this reduction we have not long since heard complaints from independent workers in certain districts in London.

To return, however, to the testimony given by the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners as to the general effect of relief in reducing wages. An employer of Labour says, 'It is quite contrary to reason that any person should pay a man for his work sufficient to support a whole family, which in some cases would be 20*s*. a week.' The Commissioners thus continue:—'And even if they prefer to pay in rates what they would otherwise pay in wages, they prefer the payment of rates which recur at intervals, and the payment of which may from time to time be put off, to the weekly ready-money expenditure of wages.' At page 61 the Commissioners tell us that 'farmers prefer low wages and high rates.' Mr. Ellman, a witness, states that 'the farmers wish that every man should receive an allowance from the parish according to his family, and declare that high wages and free labour would overwhelm them!'

Again, at page 71 of the Report, the following instructive statement occurs:—'In the meantime wages are reduced, and even of those very wages a part is paid by others. The principal outgoing of the farm [wages] is reduced, and as long as the produce remains the same, the occupier, if himself the owner, or a leaseholder, gains the benefit of the difference between what he formerly paid in wages and what he now pays, subject only to the deduction of his additional expenditure in rates—a deduction which, if he were the only ratepayer, would be at least equal to his new gains, but which may be trifling if he is only one amongst many ratepayers, some of whom, such as the tithe-owner and the tradesman, are to a very small extent employers of labour. This accounts for the many instances in our evidence of the indifference of our farmers in some places to Poor Law expenditure, and in other instances of their positive wish to increase it.'[1] Such, then, is the practical testimony of employers of labour to the point of proof now before us, that the amount of rates proportionally reduces the amount of wages. Because rates reduce wages, employers have kept up rates. But further testimony to the fact that rates keep down wages is afforded by the significant evidence even of an agricultural labourer, given at pages 85 and 86 of the Report:—'Some of the farmers,' said this witness, 'like to poke the men on the roads, so as to make the blacksmith and the shopkeepers come in, which helps the rates. *Question.*—But do not the workmen see that the farmers do this to serve their own turn, and pay less in wages? *Answer.*—Yes; that

[1] Report, pp. 71–2.

is how it is. When the farmer has got his stock in, he says, "Now you may go, and the parish may keep you." He will get these men to do an extra day or two's work, but he won't give them more than the parish gives.'

Thus, then, we see that poor-rates have been, and still are, used directly as an instrument for keeping down wages, by being made a supplement to them, as well as a provision against the disablement of wages-earners, or the interruption of their employment. But it is chiefly with the indirect but certain tendency of all compulsory poor-relief to keep down wages that we are at present concerned. Readers may have noticed, and I will therefore digress to explain, the apparent contradiction between this testimony, showing that employers have kept up poor-rates as reducing wages, and the testimony, cited before, proving the disastrous effect which these rates have exerted on the interests of agricultural employers. The Commissioners themselves have explained this seeming discrepancy by pointing out the shortsightedness of employers, who, though they may gain for the moment by practically throwing part of their wages on the parish, yet lose enormously in the longer run by deteriorating the industrial qualities of their *employés*, and leading them to trust to the parish rather than to their own exertions, or the goodwill of their employers. The Commissioners further show that these employers, by favouring the giving of parish money to their labourers, swelled the poor-rates to so great a bulk, as that in the end those rates became equal in pressure to the payment of wages, and even, as actually happened to a

great extent before 1834, covered all the profits of agriculture. The evidence adduced illustrates the shortsightedness of employers in favouring poor-rates as a means of reducing wages. Thus one of the witnesses examined, a solicitor of much experience in the purchase and sale of land, remarks 'that the preponderance of interest is thought by the tenant to be in a high rate, partly because he is shortsighted enough to fancy that, as his fellow-parishioners share in it, it falls lighter on himself.'[1] The Commissioners themselves say as thus, 'ultimately, without doubt, the farmer finds that pauper labour is dear, whatever be its price.' The citations now and in a former page, made from this Report, may sufficiently serve the purpose of showing how it is that numerous employers of agricultural labour have favoured the giving of poor-relief, and yet that those rates proved ultimately harmful to their interests. It would seem, in fact, that the efforts of employers to keep up rates vary inversely, as in particular parishes they pay a certain proportion of the poor-rates. Where they pay but a smaller proportion of these rates, it is their apparent interest to throw their *employés* as much as possible upon the rates; but where they pay so great a proportion of the rates as that its amount equals or exceeds the amount which they would otherwise have to pay in wages, they are inclined to keep down the rates.

I return from this digression, made to reconcile the two seemingly conflicting facts in evidence, viz., that poor-rates are in some cases favoured by employers to keep down wages, and yet that their interests have in

[1] Report, p. 61.

a large number of instances been grievously damnified by these rates. The point before us is the tendency of poor-relief to lower wages, in proof of which tendency it has been shown that employers of labour, with their almost unerring sagacity in the perception of their *immediate* interests, have, by favouring the granting of poor-relief, practically recognised its tendency to lower wages.

That such is the tendency of poor-relief may also be seen from the consideration that the demand for labour, and the rate of its remuneration, depend in some degree on the *quality* of the labour, but that in proportion as compulsory relief is available to the worker, that quality is likely to be inferior, as he will have the less motive for endeavouring to please his employer.

Again, it is evident that the anticipatory reliance upon poor-relief tends to diminish the rate of wages, by encouraging improvident marriage and illicit intercourse, and thus giving an artificial stimulus to population. Hence an excessive competition in the labour market, by which wages must be reduced; while the increase of population, increasing the demand for the necessaries of life, must render those necessaries dearer, and consequently diminish the purchasing power of the wages, and so *in effect* reduce the wages themselves.

That poor-rates diminish the purchasing power of wages is seen also from the fact that, as house rent is a considerable item in the necessary expenses of the earners, so it must be higher in proportion to the weight with which poor-rates fall on the owners of those houses. For it is plain that the owners cannot let their houses

so cheaply as they might let them had they no poor-rates to pay upon them. If the tenants pay those rates, the same effect is produced in diminishing the purchasing power of their wages.

That poor-rates depress wages is further seen from the consideration that those rates are, in one point of view, virtually a supplement of wages, making a provision for the disablement, or the temporary non-employment, of the wages-earners. Except for these rates, the employers of labour would be compelled by the necessity of the case, the equity of things, the law of demand and supply, to give to their *employés* wages sufficient to enable them not only to maintain themselves when in work, but also to make provision against their temporary non-employment or their permanent disablement. But the law undertakes to make this provision for them out of the rates; hence wages are lower than they would be if the law made no such provision.

The passing remark shall here be made, that it would on many accounts be far better for the wages-earners if they were enabled to make, and made, this provision out of their wages, instead of the law making it for them. The provision which they would thus make for themselves would ordinarily be more effectual than that which the law now makes for them, and which of necessity is limited to a bare sufficiency for the purpose. In making such provision they would learn habits of accumulation for the prospective benefit of themselves and their families, to the great promotion of the material well-being of their class, aye, and to the advancement of the national wealth; above all,

they would learn the great lesson of self-respect, and of a true and manly independence. However, the consideration that Poor Laws furnish a supplement, such as it is, of wages, in providing for the disablement or temporary non-employment of the wages-earners, is an instance of the operation of those laws in keeping down the rate of actual wages.

Lastly, the Settlement Laws, a necessary adjunct of our Poor Law system, operate to keep wages lower, by discouraging hand-workers from carrying their commodity, which is labour, to the best market, and by restricting them to the wages of the localities in which they are respectively settled.

Conversely, the reduction of poor-rates leads to the raising of wages—a fact of which proof is given in the following evidence before the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners of 1832:—'The absorption of the able-bodied paupers, or, in other words, their conversion into independent labourers employed within the parish (Poplar) was immediately followed by an improvement in wages. . .' The Rev. E. J. Faithful, examined:—'Have the wages of the independent labourers been improved since the change of system in the administration of Poor Laws? *Ans.*—Decidedly so; and the wages are higher here than in any parish in the neighhood where a similar system has not been adopted. . .' 'In the adjacent parish of Welwyn,' continues the Report, 'where the same system [of dispauperization] has been adopted, the wages of the independent labourers were improved. At Swallowfield one of the first fruits of the change was that single independent labourers received better wages. At Bingham, Southwell, and

St. Mary's, Nottingham [places at which the administration of the Poor Law had been reformed] Mr. Cowell [an Assistant-Commissioner] made special enquiries as to the effect of the change upon the wages of labourers belonging to the classes receiving parochial relief, and found that in every instance there had been a striking improvement.' These extracts from the Report and the evidence accompanying it, show that in proportion as compulsory maintenance, and therefore poor-rate, is reduced, the tendency of wages is to rise. It would, therefore, follow that, if no compulsory maintenance were exacted, the money now expended in such maintenance would be expended in wages. In fact, the fewer the deductions from the fund from which wages are paid, the better wages up to a certain point will be paid. In other words, the better off a class of employers are, the more they can afford to pay in remuneration of work, and the more, within the limits assigned by the supply of that work, they will pay in that form. This statement is illustrated by the well-known fact, that in domestic service wealthier masters give higher wages than poorer masters, though no more work and no greater skill be required of the servants.

One way in which the diminution of poor-rates affects favourably the rate of wages, is explained in the Report. When the labourers who have been dependent on poor-rates are thrown on their own industry, one might expect, at first thought, that by their competition the wages of the entire body of labourers would be injuriously affected. And this certainly would be the case, if they added nothing to the fund from which wages come. But by their labour they add to that

fund, and so enable the employer to give more wages to all his labourers. The more the labourers, within certain limits, whom he employs, the more are his gains, and therefore, the greater his power to remunerate his labourers. One single person who has no property, and is supported without working, is, in fact, supported gratuitously by the industry of others. His conversion from a pauper living on the rates into a labourer producing his own subsistence, and, in addition to that, a profit to his employer, so far enables the employer to give better wages. Thus, then, it comes to pass that the money saved in poor-rates is soon either wholly or chiefly paid in increased wages. If, therefore, the reduction of poor relief tends to the improvement of wages, it cannot be doubted that poor relief itself tends to the reduction of wages.

This point—viz., that poor-rates have a lowering effect upon wages—has been dwelt upon the longer in that it appears to be but inadequately recognised by the well-wishers of the wages-earning classes, as well as by those classes themselves.

Thus, then, is the welfare of the wages-earning portion of the population, in a material point of view, prejudiced by the system of compulsory maintenance. The stress of maintaining the idle and the improvident falls, in fact upon the industrious and provident; so that whatever the former gain, the latter must lose. Paupers live gratuitously upon a tax levied on the labour and the savings of non-paupers. Pauperism, it has been well observed, reverses the primeval law, saying, 'In the sweat, not of thy face, but that of others, shalt thou have bread to eat.'

The money expended in maintaining an able-bodied pauper would, if not so expended, be applied directly or indirectly to the employment of labour. All that is given to the idle and improvident would have been given to the industrious and provident. The parochial provision upon which pauperism depends is thus a tax upon wages as well as upon property. This tax, as it has been well observed by Mr. Walker in his 'Original,' is levied on the best labourers in a larger proportion than on the worst, and its proceeds distributed to the worst in a larger proportion than to the best. The pauper, in fact, is like the spoiled child of a family, whose favours are in deduction from the claims of the other members of it. Surely all industrious and honest wages-earners, taking an intelligent view of their own interest, will perceive that through the practice of compulsory maintenance they have in effect to board, clothe, and lodge gratis all their idle and improvident fellows, and accordingly will be the first to welcome the prospect of a change which shall sweep away a practice so injurious to themselves. They will meet that change with British courage, in cheerful confidence as to its certain results of due benefit to themselves. Indeed, the fact that poor-relief is a subtraction fron their earnings seems even now to be dawning on their minds, if we may judge from the following statement made by the representative of a Board of Guardians at a recent Poor Law conference:[1] 'I have reason, said this gentleman, 'to believe that some of the best men who have emigrated from North Lincolnshire have

[1] Report of first Annual Poor Law Conference for North Midland District, held at Leicester, November 25, 1875, p. 333.

done so from a determination to separate themselves from a burden consequent on the administration of the Poor Laws, rather than from any dissatisfaction on the labour-question. One of my best men, who had not less than three shillings a day all last winter, left me in the spring, and told me he was determined to leave a country where the laws compelled men willing to work to maintain those who could, but would not, do so.' Every industrious and provident worker is forced by law to maintain those who will not maintain themselves, and wilful pauperism is in fact a conspiracy of idleness and improvidence to rob industry and thrift. All persons therefore who desire the welfare of the wages-earning population must concur in the following sentiment expressed by Mr. Longley, the well-known Poor Law Inspector, at the London Conference of Guardians, in July, 1875: 'I should be very glad if the working classes could be made to understand, as I believe they will ultimately, that out-relief means low wages.'[1]

Similar was the sentiment of the experienced and observant Mr. Walker, the author of the 'Original:' 'It is to be wished,' wrote he, 'that the prudent part of these classes would heartily unite against the spirit of pauperism, as the worst of all possible enemies to their nearest interests.'

The comparatively high level which wages have reached of late years in spite of heavy poor-rates, and wide-spread pauperism, may indeed be objected against the position that wages are lowered by those rates. If, however, this position be true, it follows that but for poor-rates wages would have been still higher. Their

[1] Report of Poor Law Conference for 1875, p. 66.

present level is to be attributed to the greatly increased demand for labour, which may be only temporary- nay, which, as we are warned, will certainly abate when a fluctuation only too probable takes place in the general prosperity of the country. For when commerce and manufactures languish, agriculture also suffers, employment of all kinds becomes scarcer, and consequently wages fall.

But the depression of wages is only a small part of the detriment which a system of compulsory relief causes to the material interests of the hand-working population. The system tends to increase the very indigence which it proposes to relieve, and it exerts this tendency not only by reducing wages below their natural level, but by removing the motives to thrift—that great safeguard against indigence, that indispensable condition of material well-being. We have an instance of this efficacy of thrift almost before our eyes in the flourishing condition of a neighbouring country in spite of its recent heavy calamities. 'Much of the prosperity of France,' says the leading journal, 'must be attributed to the amazing thrift of her people, who would save money out of wages which would hardly suffice to keep English labourers off the pauper roll.'[1] 'On the contrary, by encouraging improvidence,' say the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners of 1832, 'our Poor Law adds a factitious chance of ruin to those inevitable accidents of health and fortune which make the reward of steady industry in some degree precarious.'

There are in truth but few people in the world who will deny themselves the present gratifications to be

[1] *Times*, January 26, 1876.

obtained through the expenditure of money, when they can securely reckon upon the supply of future need. The Poor Law, in removing the motives to thrift in handling wages, has the same effect with that of serfdom itself. This effect appears to have been one of the obstacles to the designs of Alexander I. of Russia for the emancipation of serfs in his dominions. 'The serfs of Esthonia and Courland,' writes his biographer, 'by long habits of dependence on their superiors, were deprived of all thrift or idea of providing against the winter seasons and old age.'[1] Nay, what has been said of the negro in this matter is true of the pauper actual or the pauper expectant:—'He appears to have no idea of cause and consequence. He does not cast back for experience, or forward with any aspiration.'

We are, however, sometimes told that wages are generally too low for the purposes of thrift; and this flattering tale has often been repeated to the wages-earners themselves. No doubt, as we have endeavoured to show, wages are kept below their natural level by the operation of poor-rates as of other taxation. Still, in answer to the assertion that wages are too low to enable the earners to lay by any portion of them for future wants, it may be observed that under the influence of our Poor Law system they mostly spend in the purchase of luxuries, such as alcoholic liquors, any increase which they receive in wages; that they marry upon their wages, and undertake the expense of families; that they can find funds for trades' unions, labour unions, strikes; and that, as a matter of fact, some few receivers of wages, no better off than thousands of their fellows, do lay by,

[1] Joyneville's 'Life of Alexander I.,' p. 181.

and that therefore those thousands might lay by also. It is also to be observed that the classes in question are too generally, and that chiefly through their traditional and often unconscious habit of reliance on the poor-rates, ignorant or indifferent about the concerns of domestic economy, helpless or careless to make their wages 'go' as far as they might be made to go. For example, I am informed, on the authority of the lady who at one time had the supervision of the School of Cookery at South Kensington, that the object in establishing that School was to teach the poorer classes a more thrifty as well as nutritious and palatable manner of preparing their food, but that that object has been entirely frustrated through their indifference about any improvement in the matter. I learn also from a mutual friend that a lady, observing the wasteful way in which her poorer neighbours managed with regard to their food, went through the course in order that she might teach them its more economical methods, but that she found her efforts to induce them to practise these methods wholly vain. She had gone to no little expense of money, time, and trouble in attending this School, and proceeded to impart her instructions at some cottages in her vicinity; but on going round them a week afterwards she found that the inmates had all returned to their old wasteful and slovenly ways of living, and she has come to the conclusion that it is useless to attempt to induce these classes to deal with their victuals in a more economical manner. Of the shiftless and wanton wastefulness ingrained by traditional habits into the population, a measure was given by the conduct of our soldiers in the Crimea in refusing

to touch food such as their French allies would come and ask for at the English camp and turn to their own culinary purposes. Persons who have made visits to the back streets and courts inhabited by the poorer classes in London tell us of the enormous waste of provisions which is visible in those localities. It was the well-known calculation of Francatelli that from the food wasted in London alone he should be able to furnish a dinner daily to a thousand persons. Assuming the approximate correctness of this celebrated *chef's* calculation with respect to London alone, we may form some notion of the amount of waste which constantly takes place throughout the kingdom, without going so far as Mr. Mundella goes in his estimate, 'that one-third of the food of the working classes is wasted.'[1] People are sometimes disposed to attribute all this wastefulness not to the pauperised morale of the poorer classes themselves, but to the *example* of the waste which often goes on in the houses of rich people. But we may be assured that this waste is not according to the wish of the rich people themselves. It is caused by the conduct of their servants, whose whole class is affected by pauperism, and it is in fact but another instance of the evil effects of pauperism in causing wastefulness; for, if people of that class are, by general admission, wasteful in dealing with their own substance, they will much more be wasteful in dealing with the substance of other people. The fastidious taste and unthrifty habits of the poorer classes in London forbid them to be satisfied with simple kinds of food. Thus, a London

[1] Speech on the occasion of a lecture by Professor Leone Levi, on 'Work and Wages,' February, 1877.

hotel-keeper was in the habit of daily giving the broken victuals of his house to a certain poor applicant, and on one occasion, from curiosity, he followed her on her way home to see what she would do with the quantity she had just received. After she had disappeared from his street he saw her throw away the bread, reserving only the fragments of meat. It is stated that a large portion of the wages-earning and poorer classes in London will generally eat no bread but such as is 'hot from the bakers' ovens.' Horses are largely fed upon bread which has been thrown away by these classes, while considerable quantities of it are daily trodden down in the streets. These two last facts are related on the direct testimony of a frequent eye-witness.

The immense destruction, at our sea-side fishing places, of fish not large enough for present consumption is notorious, although Mr. Buckland and others have exerted themselves to bring again into force an Act of Parliament which forbids this wanton waste of the national resources.

It is known that in London great quantities of unsold provisions, not of the best quality, but still fit for purposes of human food, are daily destroyed as unsaleable, even to the poorest. The fastidiousness of the pauper appetite, in regard to kinds of food, was exemplified by an anecdote related to the present writer, whose informant lives in a wealthy district of London. The dwellers in that district, finding themselves constantly solicited for alms both at their houses and in the streets, and followed by hawkers 'with combs and knitting,' determined, in order to stop these importunities, upon the formation of a Society, whose business it should be, when an applica-

tion for relief was referred to it by one of the members, to offer to the applicant bread, by which his present hunger would be satisfied, and to take down his name and place of abode, with a view to finding out whether his circumstances warranted further relief. The establishment of this society immediately reduced the extent of mendicity within very narrow limits in that quarter. The preliminary dole of 'bread to the hungry' was apparently intolerable; for soon after the establishment of this Society my informant, on being applied to in the street for alms, offered the applicant one of the Society's relief tickets, which however was instantly rejected with the indignant answer, 'Why, they only give bread there without any butter.' The applicant certainly did not agree with Horace in his sentiment—'Panis latrantem stomachum bene leniet;' bread will well stay the barking wolf within!

It must be confessed that the long continued influences of pauperism have created a remarkably shiftless and helpless generation, sluggish and devoid of mental resource in the exigencies of life, and contrasting unfavourably with the same classes elsewhere in ability to turn their hands to any honest and feasible method of gaining a livelihood. It is remarked in those seaports of the United States where poorer emigrants of various nationalities are received, that the English emigrants are invariably the most difficult to place out in industrial occupations. Nor can we be surprised if the Americans complain of the shoals of destitution and incapability which, coming from this country, are constantly cast out upon their shores. The hindrance which all this helplessness

offers to economical management is sufficiently obvious.

But the fact must not be overlooked that, as during the last few years the wages of artisans and mechanics have greatly increased, and a considerable increase of wages has also taken place in favour of agricultural labourers, so the ability to save is proportionably increased. We hear of certain manual industries in which wages to the amount of 1*l.* or 1*l.* 10*s.* a day, or even more, are paid; indeed, it is stated that in some cases artisans and artificers can, by regular work, obtain as much as 500*l.* or 600*l.* in the year. We learn upon high authority that there is now a tendency to the better remuneration of hand-workers than of head-workers.[1] It appears also that the statement of the Earl of Derby at Edinburgh in 1876, that 'the Income Tax did not reach the working classes,' caused some discussion among 'working men,' and that one of them in consequence wrote to his lordship, stating that 'a large number of his fellow-workmen had paid, and were still paying, Income Tax.'

Yet this increase, or high rate, of wages, is seldom attended with the practice of prudent economy; and when the receivers of such wages are, either by their own voluntary act or by causes out of their control, debarred for a time from earning them, a loud cry of distress is raised, and recourse is had to parochial rates or to private beneficence, or to both expedients at the same time, and the distress is relieved, but the ratepayers suffer. Frequent accounts are given of the

[1] Speech of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., on delivering art prizes at Greenwich, 1875.

prodigal expenditure of high wages.[1] Thus we hear of highly-paid workmen in one industry limiting their

[1] This expenditure is illustrated on a large scale in the subjoined report of a lecture which appeared in the *Times* in January, 1877:—

'BRITISH WORKMEN AND NATIONAL PROSPERITY.—Mr. Rathbone, M.P., on Tuesday night addressed a meeting of the working men of Liverpool on the responsibility of the industrial classes in respect to national prosperity. Pointing out the increasing competition against which this country as the great commercial centre of the world had to contend, Mr. Rathbone proceeded to show by the universal rise of wages and fall of profits that the labouring classes were now receiving a very much larger share of the income of the country than previously could be commanded by them. The classes who formerly got this money might many of them have spent their share foolishly and extravagantly, but a large proportion of the income was nevertheless saved, and these savings became in turn capital, stimulating the national prosperity and furnishing the fund out of which higher wages were paid. But a different order of things was to be witnessed now. We were spending faster than we were making, consuming more than we were producing. We had escaped, and for a time only, a serious disaster, because this country had, under the discredit which at present attached to many foreign securities, sold out enormously the foreign stocks in which her former savings were invested; and if by this process the available hard cash of the country had been temporarily increased, we had sacrificed a large portion of this capital and greatly reduced our future income. It would be impossible to continue thus to burn the candle at both ends, and at the same time maintain our present position and prosperity, and what concerned the working classes was the diminution of the fund out of which the country had been enabled to pay higher wages than any other country except America. The expenditure and savings of the working classes presented a serious contrast. In 1872, when trade was exceptionally prosperous and the country was earning a large income, 131,000,000*l.* was spent in drink, against 119,000,000*l.* in the preceding year. In 1875 the exceptional prosperity had passed away, the price of coal and iron had fallen heavily, many of our furnaces were blown out, the foreign trade was unprofitable, the freights of our ships were falling, and large numbers of bankruptcies occurred, showing the unprofitable nature of the trade of the country. Yet there was no economy to meet these difficulties. While we exported 33,000,000*l.* less than in 1872, we actually imported 19,000,000*l.* more, and we spent in drink

labours to four days—nay, in some cases, even to three days—in the week, and spending their earnings in the

11,000,000*l.* more than even the extravagant amount returned for the prosperous year of 1872, the same excess showing itself in tea, tobacco, and other articles of which the working classes are the principal consumers. The figures for 1876 were even more unsatisfactory, the balance against this country having risen from 40,000,000*l.* in 1872 to the enormous sum of 118,000,000*l.* in the first eleven months of 1876. While this large expenditure was going on, the number of bankruptcies was greater than in any year since 1868, especially in those trades for which England furnished both the raw material and the labour. Turning to the savings, he found that the increase in deposits in the savings-banks was greater by 200,000*l.* in 1872 than it was in 1875, although in the latter year 11,000,000*l.* more was spent in drink. He had investigated the other forms of saving adopted by the working classes to see whether there had been any increase proportionate to the increased expenditure, and found that in the funds deposited in the friendly societies and in the funds deposited in the industrial and provident co-operative societies, there had been in the two years ending December, 1874, an increase at the rate of only half-a-million a year in the funds of the friendly societies, and a similar increase in those of industrial societies. As to investing in house property, he applied in Liverpool to one of the banks whose deposits are not only very large and collected from a very wide basis, but which receive the funds of numerous building societies, and the result was to find that out of deposits of upwards of 5,000,000*l.*, not above 10,000*l.* was deposited directly by the working classes, and that the funds now in the hands of the building societies were principally derived, not from the labouring classes in receipt of weekly wages, but from small tradesmen and other capitalists. Formerly in Liverpool these societies looked largely for their funds to the savings of the working classes, but now they were used mainly by other people. While this was so, competition in labour was coming in more and more from abroad. Wood work in a fully manufactured state could be sold here imported from the United States and Norway at 40 per cent. less than prices in this country. In 1866 we were receiving timber from the Baltic no longer in the form of logs, to be sawn in this country, but sawn into planks ready for use; and now, in 1877, this wood came, not only sawn, but manufactured. Inquiring how the work could be done in America at the price, he was told that the workmen in that country worked on Mondays, while many here did not. America, to recover from the effects

course of the next week; of the miners in a certain district feeding their greyhounds upon 'prime joints of mutton;'[1] of the iron-miners in Cleveland keeping greyhounds 'in high condition;' of the artisans in a manufacturing district of Yorkshire spending a large proportion of their wages in the most costly articles of food, such as are seldom seen at the tables of men of the professions or of moderate fixed incomes. Of these particular artisans it was said to the writer by a person who lived among them, 'They don't drink their wages; they eat them.' The present writer was informed by an intimate friend who had been staying in one of the mining districts that while he happened to be calling at a jeweller's shop, the wife of a miner came into it

of her civil war, had been economizing steadily, had been rapidly paying off her debt, and was one of our most formidable competitors. The condition of the people of France was shown by that country's prosperity. French public funds were largely held by the working classes. In 1870 in that country there were 1,187,290 inscriptions of persons in the books of the National Debt and certificates issued to bearer, and the number had since more than trebled. It was by the savings of the people that France paid off the German indemnity. In this rich country only 108,000 persons held investments in the national funds; in France the number was over 2,000,000, though in the latter country wages had never been on the level obtained in this country. During the last two years a considerable portion of the wages for labour in England had come not out of earnings, but out of capital, and this could not continue without producing a serious crisis in which the working classes would be most severe sufferers. His advice was, "Lay up now while you have good wages, so as to be prepared to meet the trouble which threatens at no distant date to overtake us."'

[1] The Bishop of Manchester, addressing a meeting at Manchester, made the following statement: 'He was told at Oldham one night that he would be surprised if he knew how many nice juicy legs of mutton, with the "pope's eye" in them, were bought in that town on Saturday night to feed racing dogs.'—*Pall Mall Gazette*, March 14, 1877.

and asked for something on credit, having, as she said, no ready money wherewith to pay for it. The master of the shop demurred to the request, as the woman was already much in his debt. Thereupon she began a tale of distress, relating how that her husband was in receipt of much higher wages since he had entered on his present employment, but that he gave her less than before for the expenses of housekeeping—often no more than 5*s*. or 6*s*. a week—while he spent all the rest in drink and other self-indulgence. When she had left the shop, the master of it expressed his belief in her story, which he said was but a picture of the common practice of the class; adding that the husband was in receipt of 2*l*. 15*s*. a week, and that he and his compeers were in the habit of feasting together, away from their families, at chop-houses, on the best kinds of food, and sometimes on delicacies which had only just come into season. The production of the earliest vegetables for the consumption of artisans in the neighbouring towns forms an important item of agricultural industry in a large manufacturing district of the North. The epicurism of the class in one of these towns was illustrated by the anecdote that on one occasion, it being October 2, the day when pheasants are first brought to sale, a master manufacturer, sending out in the forenoon to buy some of this game for his own table, found that he had been anticipated by a body of artisans, who had been to the market at 6 o'clock in the morning, when the supply had just arrived, and had bought up the whole of it! In a Midland town where the making of stockings is the staple trade, it is a point of honour with the weavers to have each of

them a hare for dinner at a particular season of the year. At a town in the North where a large iron industry is carried on, a visitor of the writer's acquaintance, in going round the works under the guidance of a director, had a number of men pointed out to him who in four days of the week—and they would work no more—earned wages to the amount of 9*l.* 10*s.*, but whose wives and children, said the director, were mostly in rags. The director went on to describe the manner in which such wages were expended, and gave the following anecdote as an instance:—'I had occasion,' said he, 'to call the other day at one of these men's houses when he happened to be just going to dinner; and the man and his wife—for there were no children—were about to sit down to a sucking-pig, which the man of his own accord told me had cost a guinea.' An instance of the luxurious taste of the miners of Northumberland was witnessed by a man of fortune, who, calling at a fishmonger's shop at Newcastle, asked the price of salmon a pound, and was told that, as the fish was but newly in season, the price was 3*s.*, which he declined to give, saying that 'he should wait till salmon became cheaper;' but before he had left the shop a miner came into it, and after making the same enquiry and receiving the same answer, ordered three pounds of this costly article of consumption. At the same town it is a subject of complaint among the better-to-do class that game often is not to be bought by them, as the miners had monopolized it. The expensive joviality of highly-paid hand-workers seems, however, to be by no means confined to the consumption of comestible delicacies,

for we learn that champagne frequently finds its way to their festive gatherings. The following well known and characteristic anecdote exemplifies their preference for wine of the best quality at their convivial meetings. A party of miners, bent on bacchanalian enjoyment, betook themselves together to an hotel, where they ordered 'a bottle of the best port wine, such as the gentlemen drink.' The servant brought them up a bottle which she believed to contain the desired liquor. When they had finished the bottle, they summoned her, and asked, 'Are you quite sure this is the same wine the gentlemen drink?' 'Yes,' she confidently replied; 'it comes from the very place where the gentlemen's wine is kept.' 'Well,' rejoined the spokesman of the party, 'it's rather sharp, but bring us another bottle.' Soon afterwards the master of the hotel, who had happened to be absent at the time of their coming, returned, and on hearing what had passed with regard to their potations, found that, through the servant's mistake, they were in the act of finishing their second bottle of ketchup!

In a letter to the *Times* of October 14, 1875, the late Lord Lyttelton speaks of the prodigal habits of the 'nailers' of the Black Country in the following terms:—

'The idleness of men who will not work more than half the time they ought, who in that short time earn much more than they know what to do with, and who squander most of what they get in drink and other indulgences, leaving their families no better off in good times than in bad, is one of the most deplorable counter evils to be set against the good results of

prosperous times.' This high living of highly-paid hand-workers is so notorious as to afford food for merriment to jocular periodicals. 'Jolly fellows' all these, no doubt, with their luxurious fare and flowing cups, while they can earn wages sufficient to support their jollity; and no one would have a right to blame this jollity, were it not ultimately at the public expense.

Nay, who can blame these hard-working wages-earners for snatching such pleasures as fall within their reach, when they merely act as he who should blame them would probably have acted in the same circumstances? Can we uphold a state of law which teaches men thus to squander their earnings, and then turn round and blame them for their prodigality? It is not the men whom we should blame; the law is to be blamed which makes them what they are.[1]

[1] Profuseness of expenditure may be said to accompany them even to the grave, if we may judge by the following letter on funeral expenses, addressed to the Right Hon. John Bright, M.P., which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper of November 5, 1875, as thus:—

'We have received the following letter, addressed to Mr. John Bright, M.P., on the subject of funeral reform, from Mr. John Hall, clerk to the guardians of the Huddersfield Union:

'"Sir,—Perusing the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, a few days ago, I read your letter in reference to the ceremonies and customs in connection with interments as observed in this country, and, without attempting to presume, permit me to say that I fully coincide with every word contained in your communication. I am sure it is not generally known to what extent the ridiculous and absurd practices attending 'funeral exhibitions' and 'funeral expenses' at the present time prevail. For years I have condemned such practices whenever I have had an opportunity of doing so, but of course my feeble efforts have had but little, if any, effect. After an experience in poor-law legislation of over twenty years, I am able to speak on this subject with considerable knowledge, and one or two mild illustrations—drawn from facts—may suffice to show how great a hold the customs

Extravagance, with parish relief in prospect, extends, as might be expected, to domestic servants. Thus the

referred to have upon the people; and unfortunately in this, as in most matters connected with national and fashionable customs involving improvidence, the poor are the greatest sufferers.

'"Many cases similar to the following have come under my own observation: A working man with a wife and family prudently enters his name in and becomes a member of a sick and burial society, the weekly payments to which amount to a few pence, the claim allowable at death varying from say 2*l.* to 15*l.* In course of time the man dies, leaving a widow and a family of children, most of whom are too young to be any help to their widowed mother. Due notice is given to the society, and the amount of claim, which for the present purpose we will suppose to be 10*l.*, is handed over to the widow. Now it would be a natural conclusion to arrive at that, being a careful and well-meaning woman ordinarily, this widow will lay out the 10*l.* in the best and most economical way. But do we find this to be the case? On the contrary, a fine hearse and mourning coach or coaches are ordered. The undertaker receives instructions to make a 'lined' coffin and furnish a supply of hatbands and scarves, and to appoint the customary mutes, in addition to which refreshments of a most substantial kind and to an almost unlimited extent, are provided, and, strange to say, the whole proceedings are carried out on this extravagant principle.

'"Still, I should be glad if the extravagance ended even here; but, Sir, you know as well as I that it does not. Of course all the family must have 'mourning.' The modest but 'coloured' garments which perhaps a short time before were obtained for the children, must be cast on one side, and 'mourning' obtained and worn in lieu thereof. And what is the result of all this? Simply that the family is plunged into the utmost poverty, distress, and debt; and, *as I have frequently seen, the mother within a week or two after her husband's death is compelled to apply to the parish for relief for herself and her children;* whereas had she been content to have interred her husband in accordance with her means, she would have had a good portion of the claim left to help her in the way of some small business or otherwise—at all events, she would have had the satisfaction of knowing that she had not dishonoured her husband's name by incurring undischargeable debt in and about his interment. I could quote cases much more distressing in their details than the above, wherein, in addition to such uncalled-for extravagance, women have actually sold the furniture

servant of a widow lady of fortune, living in a flat in London, is not contented with the same fare with her mistress, but spends her surplus wages 'on game, poultry, and port wine of a superior quality;' and when kindly remonstrated with for her improvidence by the lady, who had originally taken her from a state of great indigence, replies frankly that 'she should enjoy herself while she could, and then she supposed she should go to the *old house.*' The immoderate expenditure in dress which prevails in this class, 'carrying their wages on their backs,' is notorious, and must be favoured by the pervading influences of Poor Laws, whether consciously or unconsciously to the persons themselves. These instances, introduced for the purpose of illustrating and impressing a general statement, cannot be considered as exceptional. They are among those which have casually come to the knowledge of the present writer, who has no reason to believe that others could not quote similar instances from their own observation or on credible testimony.

of their already scantily furnished homes in order to provide for what they term a 'decent' funeral, and within a few days have found themselves utterly ruined, their homes broken up, and their children, with themselves, in the workhouse. Are not these cases sufficient to make one cry out against such evil practices? Such men as you, Sir, who hold high and honourable positions, may, and do, accomplish a great deal in the way of reforming the people in this, as well as in other evil practices; but I fear little real good will be done without the co-operation and sympathy of the middle and upper classes of society, who, I regret to say, so far as this matter is concerned, are as foolish as their poorer and more ignorant neighbours.—I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

'"JNO. HALL, Clerk to the Guardians of the Huddersfield Union.
"To the Right Hon. John Bright, M.P., Rochdale."'

There are, indeed, persons who lay the blame of this prodigal expenditure of wages neither on the people who practise it, nor on the law which encourages it, but on the example of other classes of the community. This flattering excuse is, however, not consonant with reason, nor, indeed, wholly with fact. The hand-working classes are in no wise bound to follow gregariously the example of others whose circumstances differ from theirs. People of all classes usually live according to their means—or, at least, according to the estimate they form of those means; and why should persons who have less means choose to imitate in their expenditure those who have greater means? Then, as to fact, it may be said that among the class of professional men, of men of moderate fixed incomes, and among the classes of clerks, smaller farmers, and shopkeepers, abundant examples are given of self-denying frugality, exercised both to 'make both ends meet' at the present, and for the prospective benefit of families. At any rate, nothing is gained by pleading extravagance in any class as a 'set-off' against the extravagance which Poor Law has fostered in the wages-earning population. However, all this self-indulgent expenditure on the part of the earners of wages is an evidence that prudent laying by might be practised by thousands of them to whom it is at present unknown, or, in other words, that wages are to a great extent high enough for the purposes of thrift.

Thus, then, the law of compulsory aid operates, by encouraging wasteful expenditure, to make wages-earners poor, and to keep them poor. In fact, first by aiding to reduce wages below their natural rate, and

then by counteracting the grand motive to economy in handling those wages, Poor Laws increase the poverty which they are designed to diminish, and tend to hinder the wages-earning classes from maintaining a consistent level of material comfort and well-being. The joint effect of high wages and of Poor Law on the material condition of a large number of the wages-earners is that they live in a comfortless alternation between indulgence and privation, between prodigality and the parish. Well might the sagacious Arthur Young observe that 'the degree of indigence and misery is exactly in proportion to the assistance given to the poor-rates,' and the philanthropic Chalmers denounce 'the cruelty of poor-rates;' and the experienced author of 'The Original' give it as his opinion that 'legal provision makes the mass of misery which it can but inadequately relieve!'

An apparent attempt is sometimes made to deny the impoverishing effects of our Poor Laws by pointing to the great amount of indigence in some countries where no similar laws exist. Yet assuredly there is an abundance of indigence here in England. And when the impoverishing effects of our laws are spoken of, it is by no means implied that such laws are the only agency of impoverishment in the world. Hence no amount of indigence in a country devoid of such Poor Laws as ours can be cited to disprove their baneful effects upon the material welfare of a population.

In recounting the impoverishing effects of compulsory relief we must not omit to mention its pressure on the poorer, the 'semi-pauperized,' class of rate-payers. This much-suffering portion of the community,

already burdened with the maintenance of themselves and their families, are yet subjected to an additional burden in having to maintain gratuitously other people and their families. Under this double burden they often break down, and sink from the position of rate-payers to that of participators in the produce of the rates. Thus, as Professor Fawcett observes on the point, 'pauperism engenders pauperism, and the process goes on with accumulating force.'[1]

'In localities,' says the same Professor, 'where the poor chiefly reside, the rates are so heavy as to make many paupers who might otherwise be able to help themselves.'[2] At a Poor Law Conference, which was held at Basingstoke in October, 1875, the chairman, Mr. Beach, M.P., said to the same effect in the course of his speech:—'I think there is a great hardship which is felt very much in towns, where men who are in the receipt of high wages suddenly fall out of employment, or are ill, and instantly apply for relief; and those who have to pay the rates, it must be remembered, are frequently less able to pay them than the very mechanics who apply for relief a few days before.'[3]

A representative at another Conference of the same kind remarks that—'Poor relief is, in fact, contributed by rate-payers, a large proportion of whom have, perhaps, worked harder, have been more frugal, temperate and self-denying, and yet are hardly less poor than the very paupers whom they help to support.'

[1] Lectures on Pauperism, p. 78.
[2] Ibid., p. 66.
[3] Poor Law Conferences for 1875, p. 228.

A striking testimony in proof of the weight with which poor-rates bear on a class only just raised above those who are receiving relief, is contained in a letter, dated May 6, 1877, addressed to the present writer by a correspondent on whose veracity he can rely:—'I heard while at Salisbury an instructive anecdote about the working of our Poor Laws. A poor family on whom poor-rates were levied, being unable to pay them, had to sell some of their bed-furniture to raise some money for the purpose. The buyer was a regular recipient of parish relief, and was wealthy enough to purchase the furniture which this poor-rate payer had to sell for his support!'

The following statement in a principal London journal of September 13, 1877, is another illustration of the general fact before us:—'There are, it is well known, a great many indigent people in Fulham, and the poor's rates are high. There are again a proportion of parishioners so perverse, *or so poverty stricken*, that it becomes necessary to issue summonses against them ere they can be persuaded to pay the legal assessment.' Looking at these, and similar facts, who shall deny that our Poor Laws create indigence and pauperism?

Such, then, as we have endeavoured to show, is the mischief in a material point of view which our Poor Law inflicts on the wages-earning population, and the smaller rate-payers also—such its impoverishing effects. Doubtless, in some cases, honest distress is relieved by it, or a rescue from hopeless poverty is effected by its timely aid; but experience shows that indigence is incalculably increased by it in the gross. A few may occasionally be benefited by its operation; but how

many thousands of wages-earners—aye, and of rate-payers also—suffer!

The Poor Law, in fact, reversing a law of nature, by which the few suffer for the benefit of the many, makes the many suffer for the benefit of the few.

SECTION IV.

DEMORALIZATION OF THE LOWER CLASSES.

THE damage, however, which the Poor Law system inflicts on the material condition of the population is a consideration of even less grave importance than is the tendency of the system to degrade and demoralize.[1] Little proof, indeed, of this tendency will be needed by those who have watched the operation of this system; still less, if they have taken part in the administration of it. But those persons who may question the fact will probably be satisfied of its truth by a perusal of the luminous Report of the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners, published in 1834, to which frequent reference has been made in this work. Therein may be seen the debased condition to which a large portion of the population were brought by the operation of such laws. Under these laws illegitimate offspring abounded, idleness flourished, drinking prevailed, prudence for men's own selves, their wives, and their children, and the care of indigent parents, became virtues almost obsolete

[1] 'In every branch of the evils connected with the administration of the Poor Laws, the pecuniary loss, great as it may be, is utterly unimportant when compared with the moral mischief.'—Report of 1834, p. 345.

among the wages-earning classes. Early and reckless marriages swelled the mass of pauperism; while the lavish granting of parish relief was so far from producing content, that it incited higher and still higher demands, which, when they could no longer be granted, resulted in agricultural riots and incendiarism. It may, indeed, be urged that all this demoralization was owing to the former and unamended state of the Poor Law. It should, however, be borne in mind that the Poor Law, as it now stands, is identical in principle with the Poor Law as it stood before, and was 'little more than an administrative reform;'[1] and that in the administration of out-door relief, its operation has come round but too nearly to the practices which obtained under the old law. The existing Poor Law, though in its letter an improvement, has, in administration, so degenerated as to resemble in effect the former state of the law.

Little heed has been paid to the intentions of the amending Act of 1834. Its provisions have been grossly evaded, or even violated. The discretionary powers given by it have proved a loop-hole, through which some of the worst practices which prevailed under the old law have again crept in.

Subsequent enactments have made further relaxations in granting 'relief,' and have thus increased the resources of pauperism. Hence the present state of the law, altogether, is practically not very greatly better than its former state, and threatens, unless its administration be radically amended, to become as bad. Although a generation has passed away since the im-

[1] Pashley on 'Poor Laws and Pauperism,' p. 265.

27041

provements made in the former state of the law, yet to undo its effects on the character and habits of the mass would require a longer time and a greater legislative alteration. In truth, during the last six-and-twenty years, particularly during the seven years preceding 1870, we seem to have been fast going back to the old Poor Law system, from which we thought to have escaped through the legislation of 1834. During those years an increasing relaxation went on in the administration of Poor Law relief.

The fatal necessity of a mischievous administration of the exceptional provisions of the amended law has been steadily bringing the country back to the perilous position in which it was placed by the older state of the law. The provisions of the amended law, and its due administration, have been much undermined in the course of years, and the old evils revived. By the amendment of the law of poor-relief the State was once saved from being positively swamped by a flood of pauperism, which, however, has largely made its way back through the leak left by permissive out-door relief. Hence, notwithstanding an abundance of employment, and a marked rise of wages, pauperism prevails to a formidable extent, though in the last three years, chiefly from these causes, which in their nature may be only temporary, it has received a slight check.[1] What, therefore, is said in the Report of 1834, as to the pauperizing and demoralizing effects of the 'old' system, applies,

[1] Since the above words were written, it appears from the report of the meeting of the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity, held in May, 1877, that 'the ratio of decrease of pauperism had in some degree *diminished*' during the past year. This statement has been confirmed by recent statistics of pauperism.

with certain qualifications, to the system actually in force.

The pauperizing effect of our present Poor Law is strikingly evinced by the fact that one person in every thirty, or more than three per cent. of the whole population, are in receipt of relief. But this bare statistical fact very inadequately represents the pauperization wrought by our Poor Laws. The mere number of paupers on the roll is no sufficient gauge of the effect of these laws in spreading the leaven of a pauperized animus through the mass of the population. The humbler classes are bred in a circumambient atmosphere of pauperism, which is generated around them by those laws, and which insensibly affects their moral being and habits. It is not only the reception of the Poor Law dole that pauperizes: it is the anticipation also of that dole as a resource against the adverse contingencies of life. The assurance which everyone feels of an ultimate maintenance, whether he be slothful or diligent, improvident or prudent, immoral, in a special sense, or the contrary, disorderly or well-conducted, must produce the fruits of sloth, improvidence, immorality, and disorderly conduct. 'When the parochial fund is considered as a property on which all have a claim, there is little difficulty in contriving pretences to make the claim good.' Even in a parish where the actual amount of pauperism is but small, the possibility of coming upon the rates exerts a pauperizing influence throughout the inhabitants, just as in a market, even a small surplus supply of a particular commodity has a lowering effect upon its price.

Through the operation of the Poor Law a traditional

habit of prospective dependence upon public aid has been formed in a large portion of the population, whether or no they may ever come to require that aid, and although this dependence upon it is often unconscious and instinctive, not deliberate and calculated.

Depending, however, on the prospect of this aid, they naturally spurn the bands of prudence and self-restraint. Hence it is that they alone, of all the classes in society, contract marriage without possessing means of meeting the expenses which marriage entails, and mostly without regard to the duty of abstaining from it for the purpose of succouring parents who are in need. In many instances illicit intercourse is encouraged by the power of throwing the maintenance of illegitimate offspring upon the poor-rates. Extremes meet; the pauper and the millionnaire are the only two personages in the community who need literally take no thought for the morrow, and who can dispense with the use of forecast in all earthly respects. The necessity of self-restraint and of respectability of conduct, which aids to keep men of business or of the professions from the imprudent or irregular gratification of their desires, is felt by paupers no more than by the wealthiest in the land. The children of paupers, though born in wedlock, cease to be a care to them when those children have been deserted by their parents, and left to the care of the parochial authorities, to be placed in the workhouse or 'boarded out' in private families. Illegitimate children are commonly thrown upon parochial provision, and are maintained in one or the other of these ways, or through the grant of out-door relief to their mothers. This 'boarding-out' system seems to deserve a

passing comment. The encouragement which it gives to the multiplication and desertion of children, legitimate as well as illegitimate, is forcibly described by a recent writer, who evidently made pauperism the subject of careful study. In a letter to the 'Times' of November 9, 1874, the late Lord Lyttelton observes, as follows, on the system of boarding-out:—'No system has ever been devised more directly opposed to the old—I hope I should not say obsolete—principle of directly encouraging independence, industry, and thrift among the labouring class, and directly encouraging their opposites. The system says to the working class, "Marry and multiply, or multiply without marrying. In either case, if you have any difficulty in providing your children with every comfort, desert them, and run away; their interest in life will be infinitely promoted by your doing so." And, so far from exhorting and encouraging them, by insurance or otherwise, to provide for their children in case of their own death, it tells them not to do so, for as orphans they will be far better off than before. The Divine law says that the sin of parents shall be visited on their children. Certainly no one has ever inferred from this fact that man should actually co-operate with the said law by punishing the children, but here we go to the opposite extreme, and say to the ill-disposed, the more you can get natural feelings and affections out of you, the more reckless of the future you can become, the better it will be for your children.'[1]

[1] 'This boarding-out system is an importation from Scotland; there it has been in operation for many years, and it is notorious that in spite of the religious zeal of the Scotch, there is far more illegitimacy in that country than in any other part of the United King-

It is painful to speak of the depravity which compulsory relief occasions through the maintenance which it provides for illegitimate offspring. For proofs of this effect we have only to turn to official documents which relate to this subject, and which but too strongly bear out the reproach cast on us as a nation by the great Irish agitator, when he contrasted this disgrace of England with the purity prevailing in the homes of the Irish peasantry.

The encouragement given by the Poor Laws to the multiplication of illegitimate children is placed in a gloomy point of view by the following passage which a Poor Law Inspector quotes from documentary evidence:—'It often happens with women with illegitimate children that, after having one child, they go out again and return to be confined within a very short time, sometimes having three or four children in this manner. When they find that they are wanted for desertion of their children in one Union, they remove to another, often under another name, and are confined there; and thus go about leaving their bastard children chargeable up and down the country.'[1]

The public maintenance of illegitimate offspring has had a similar effect with that of the method by which *enfants trouvés* were received in Paris under the first Empire, and which it was found necessary, in the cause of public morals, to abolish.

But reckless marriage and illicit intercourse, fol-

dom. In Scotland, ten per cent. of the births are illegitimate; in England, the proportion is six per cent.; and in Ireland, only three per cent.'—Fawcett on 'Pauperism,' p. 86.

[1] Report of Dr. Clutterbuck to the Local Government Board, 1874–5, pp. 217, 218.

lowed by the consignment of children to the parish, are not the only pauperizing and demoralizing results of the Poor Law system. The legal right to public relief practically abrogates the duty of parents to lay by for their children, and the duty of children to give succour to their parents. The first thought of either party respecting the needs of the other party is, 'Let them go to the parish.' Upon the broad back of the 'parish' is cast the burden which either they have brought upon themselves, or Providence has laid upon them. The husband seldom thinks of making provision against the possible widowhood of his wife; it need hardly be said that all other ties of nature or kindred are habitually disregarded in this matter. And why? Because people 'are told that they have no duties to perform to the sick, the aged, the orphan, of their own flesh and blood, inasmuch as property is chargeable for them.' With respect to the neglect of filial duty in the maintenance of disabled and indigent parents, the recent Reports of Poor Law Inspectors teem with general statements and particular instances of this deplorable result of the operation of our Poor Law. 'One of these gentlemen says of a particular Union what is notoriously applicable to almost all Unions, that 'relations, legally liable, very rarely contribute.' Legally liable! The law, it seems, practically abrogates a natural duty, and then attempts to enforce it! The aforesaid gentleman, however, gives the following instance in point, which fell under his own observation:—'On the day on which I attended a meeting of the guardians of the West Firle Union, an application was made under the following circumstances:—The family desiring relief

consisted of the following: an old man, aged 67, confessedly past work; his wife, ten years younger, earned 4*s.* a week; an unmarried son, living with his parents, and earning 13*s.* 6*d.* a week; another son, aged 17, also living in the (parents') house, and earning 10*s.* a week; two children under eight years of age. It appeared to me,' continues the Inspector, 'to be a case in which the workhouse ought to be offered, and that in the case of its not being accepted, legal proceedings ought to have been taken against the eldest son. The guardians, however, granted a weekly allowance of two shillings and two gallons of flour. I was surprised to find that in several other Unions the guardians informed me that if a similar case was brought before them, they would not be unwilling to grant out-door relief.' Such is the Inspector's statement; upon which it may be remarked that, had legal proceedings been taken against the eldest son, who was living with his parents, and receiving 13*s.* 6*d.* a week, he might have defeated the purpose of those proceedings by marrying, and pleading his inability to aid in the maintenance of his parents. A Local Government Board Inspector speaks of 'aged widowed mothers in receipt of parish relief, with grown-up sons on full pay, and daughters at service living among them;' and he gives the following case, which came under his notice, as a specimen of the common practice of devolving filial duty upon the parish:— 'Pauper invalid of 68, with wife of 42, six young children at home, the youngest an infant; has a grown-up son, a carrier; another son, a labourer, with a wife and no family; another son with wife and no family; another son with wife and no family, keeping a horse and

cart and selling coals. None of them is known to do anything for the parents. The grown-up children of the wife by her first husband take no notice of her.'[1] Stronger instances, however, than this of the neglect of children in competent circumstances to support their indigent parents will be familiar to those persons who have been cognisant of the administration of the Poor Law. The present writer remembers the case of a livery-stable keeper, who was carrying on a flourishing business, but whose aged father was left to be supported by the parish, and to work on the roads. In a certain manufacturing district, persons who have climbed from the position of wages-earners to that of mill-owners, are commonly observed to leave their destitute relatives to parish support! It may be apprehended that, while 'relief' is almost, as a matter of course, granted by the parish to indigent parents, their children will be apt to neglect their plain duty to them in this respect. Poor Laws, in fact, serve as the pretext of 'Corban' among the Jews of old, in relation to the duties of the Fifth Commandment. In England and Scotland the commonness of the custom by which sons in competent circumstances thus abandon their parents, is witnessed to by the fact that such abandonment brings with it no disgrace. Contrariwise, among the natives of Hindostan, as English residents tell us, while indigence, except in the case of those who choose to make a religious profession of poverty, is hardly seen, it is a point of honour and duty to support aged or disabled relatives.[2] To expatiate on the contrast were unnecessary.

[1] Mr. Sendall's Report, pp. 86, 89.

[2] 'By Mahometan law, a man is obliged to support his father and uncles if they be unable to support themselves.'—Schuyler's 'Turkestan.'

The extent to which 'relief' has infringed upon filial duty amongst ourselves may be gathered from a startling statement made at a recent Poor Law Conference. 'I know,' said the speaker, 'that in many cases people have looked with astonishment, as if they were injured by being called upon to perform the very first duty which rests upon them, to support those who had given them birth. It was brought to my notice the other day that in one of our large manufacturing towns there is actually an association formed for bringing about a repeal of the law, which "most unjustly and cruelly," as they allege, calls upon children to support their parents. If I had not been told of it by persons whom I can trust, I should have hardly thought it possible,' &c.[1] So completely has the Poor Law obliterated the sense of this duty from their minds, that they feel no shame in proclaiming their neglect of it!

The efficacy of a compulsory Poor Law in blunting domestic sensibilities is amply illustrated by the history of the Scottish Poor Law, which, notwithstanding the warnings of English experience, was introduced so lately as the year 1845. There, in less than thirty years, an indifference to family feeling has grown up, which could be described by an eminent Scotchman in the following terms:—'A peasantry,' says Mr. McNiel Caird, 'who in my recollection were sensitive to the highest degree that any of their kindred had received parish relief, now often claim it with eagerness, if given in money, though they still look upon the poorhouse as degrading.' So quickly has the leaven of pauper-

[1] Speech of Rev. Canon Willes at the first Annual Poor Law Conference for North Midland District, at Leicester, Nov. 24.

ism diffused itself through that well-educated and once self-respecting population!

This account of the relaxation of family ties in Scotland through the introduction of Poor Laws has been confirmed by the testimony of a gentleman of Scottish birth, who has taken a prominent part in discussions on the Poor Law, Mr. J. Elphinstone Elliot, of Whalton, near Newcastle-on-Tyne. His testimony is contained in a letter lately received from him by the present writer. This letter is of so much interest in regard to the general subject of pauper laws that my quotation from it shall not be limited to the point immediately before us. 'There is nothing,' writes this gentleman, 'in your conclusion [stated in a former edition of this work] that I can possibly object to, and a great deal that, if I had time and space, I could from my own experience confirm. Many years ago, when I was quite young, Dr. Chalmers (whose views on the subject coincided with yours) was on a visit to my father's house in Scotland, and was urging his opinions to him with his usual energy, I ventured to observe that under his system, if it ever could be carried out, a considerable number of poor people must necessarily die of starvation. To this he replied, "In London, where there is a Poor Law fully organized, it does happen that every now and then such cases occur; but in Dublin and in Scotland, where no such legalized enormity exists [this was before the introduction of Scottish Poor Laws], I don't remember a single instance." The introduction of the Poor Law into Scotland has, as I have heard from many different sources, had a very melancholy effect in loosening the

bonds of family affection, and making children indifferent to their parents. It used to be very different. I was one day asking a man who had been long known to me, and used to go out shooting and carry my bag, &c., how he was getting on, and if he was not going to take a wife. "Oh!" he said; "I am gay weel off noo, Maister John; but than ye see I hae the auld folks to provide for." I thought within myself, "If you had been on the other side of the border, you would have sent the 'auld folks' to the workhouse"—as he was a bit of a poacher and rather a scampish sort of young fellow, and not above the average in regard to sober and steady habits. The introduction of the Poor Law has also had a very bad effect on the thrifty and provident habits of the lower classes in Scotland, and in destroying or lessening the kindly feelings which used to subsist between them, and the mutual interest which they used to take in each other's welfare.' The anecdote in this letter about the young man may be taken as a measure of the difference of feeling in Scotland, before and after the introduction of a Poor Law, with respect to the support of parents by their children. Similar, in destroying the sense of family duty, was the effect of a similar Poor Law in Sweden, previously to 1863, when that law underwent a thorough reform, as we shall have occasion to mention at a future page.

Before quitting this point it may be remarked that nothing could more tend to restore the sense of family-duty in this matter than the abolition of out-door relief. By a strange inconsistency a great number of people feel no shame in allowing their relatives to become

out-door paupers, while they would think themselves disgraced if those relatives became inmates of the union-house.

The manifest duty to *society* involved in the support of destitute and helpless parents and other near relatives is, if possible, more widely ignored than are the claims of blood. Surely it is a strong presumption against the soundness of a system of law that it blots out all sense of this social duty from the minds of the large majority of a nation.

In another and too common case is the dereliction of natural duties notoriously favoured by our pauper legislation. Husbands not unfrequently desert their wives, in the assurance that they will be maintained out of the rates. This desertion sometimes takes place by collusion with the wives, so that they may receive parish 'relief,' while the husbands send them secret remittances, thus bearing only a part of the burden of maintaining them and their children. In proof of this statement the following quotation shall be made from an Inspector's Report:—'At Plymouth, where deserted wives are, as a rule, given out-relief, one of the relieving officers informed me that he had found cases in which a wife had for several weeks been receiving relief while her husband had never been out of town; and many other cases where the wife, whilst in receipt of relief, had been receiving remittances from her husband. Such remittances are very easily made without the knowledge of the relieving officer.' Such the encouragement given by the Poor Law to throw the maintenance of wife and children upon public funds.

An instance of the encouragement which this law

gives to the temporary desertion of wives and children appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of February 21, 1876 :—'At the last meeting of the St. George's-in-the-East Board of Guardians attention was called to several cases of wife desertion. One of the guardians inquired why the men had not been punished. In reply, it was stated that the wives had ceased to be chargeable. The parish is saddled with the cost of the maintenance of the men's wives and families until the culprits are discovered. If the erring husband, without further resistance, is wise enough to take back the deserted ones, he need not compensate the parish, nor fear any consequences for his past misdeeds, inasmuch as the magistrates will not convict in any case where the wife and family have ceased to become chargeable to the parish. The only chance of punishing the deserter is for the parish authorities to institute proceedings promptly, before he has had time to resume the performance of his domestic duties. When once he has succeeded in scrambling back to his vacant chair by the family fireside, it is too late: he is the master of the situation; he has enjoyed his holiday, and the parish must bear the cost.' Another and more heartless method of parental desertion, in shameful reliance upon parish succour, is, we are told, sometimes practised—at least, in London. A mother, desirous of getting rid of her child, will take it through a labyrinth of back streets, and will then suddenly disappear from it, in the confidence that some compassionate dwellers in the street in which she has left it will take the outcast to the assured refuge of 'the house.' Surely when one hears of these different methods of the desertion of domestic duties, in reliance

upon parish relief, one may hazard the remark that, if a parliament of paupers had framed the Poor Laws, they could hardly have operated more adversely to the claims of the family, and of society!

But this system of law operates in other ways to the demoralization of the population. For example, it removes the great secondary deterrent, to many minds the primary, the temporal, deterrent, from irregular or refractory conduct. What is it that keeps a large portion of the educated classes in the track of social duty and in due subordination but the fear of losing the means of self-support? And yet we have a system of law which withdraws this wholesome apprehension from the minds of the bulk of the population. Thus the farm-labourer will seldom be deterred from insolent conduct or an act of dishonesty towards his employer by the prospect of a dismissal, knowing that, even if he lose his situation, he can throw himself upon the parish for support, unless another employer will engage him in order to save the parish from an additional burden. Or he disobeys some order or neglects some necessary or important piece of work and duty connected with his employment; but for the reason above mentioned, he cares not for the just displeasure of his employer. Perhaps he is reproved for his disobedience or neglect, and, impatient of censure, he throws up his employment. Farmers complain that they cannot 'speak to'—*i.e.*, censure—their men. As for bearing any excessive or unmerited blame with manly patience—which professional men, subalterns in the Army or Navy, clerks in public offices, are often called upon to exhibit towards their superiors—the

wages-earner, trusting, consciously or unconsciously, to immediate or ultimate support at the public expense, will seldom brook such blame for a moment. Abject in his anticipatory dependence on his neighbours for their forced alms, he knows that, in a sense, he is an independent man, born to an estate lying in their pockets. Hence, with this abjectness of feeling, he often combines a proud, ill-conditioned temper, through which deserved reproof appears to him an indignity, undeserved reproof an intolerable outrage. 'Pauperism,' says Mr. Walker, in his 'Original,' 'has a base spirit, now servile, now insolent.' Accordingly, under the unamended law, the Poor Law Commissioners observe of this class that, 'relying upon public support, they are indifferent whether they oblige or disobey their masters.'[1] Under the amended law, which, as we have seen, practically approaches the elder system, the same deplorable indifference is proportionably displayed. The present writer was not long since informed by the experienced agent for a large territorial domain in Kent and Sussex, who himself cultivated a farm of some 300 acres, that now-a-days the labourers, though in receipt of higher wages, and working fewer hours, do in those hours less work, even proportionably, than they did in former years. This gentleman also stated his personal experience to the following effect:—'When I go round my farm, a labourer, seeing me come towards him, begins to work with energy, and continues to do so while I watch his proceedings; but as soon as my back is turned to him, it appears that he relapses into his former slackness.' 'How,' he repeatedly added, 'the small farmers can get on with

[1] Report of 1834, p. 68.

these hindrances I cannot understand.' This deterioration of the labourers' conduct towards their employers he attributed in part to the influence of the Labourers' Union; but the Poor Law is the fulcrum of the leverage which this union works against the masters, for the members of it are assured that, should the 'worst come to the worst' to them in their struggle for more hire, they can throw themselves on the poor-rates, which, in fact, they constantly threaten to do. This assurance of theirs is, of course, founded on the supposed 'right' which the Poor Law gives them to 'relief' in distress, however caused. If guardians were left to their unfettered discretion in granting relief in individual cases, such an assurance in the minds of *employés*, with its manifold consequences of extreme mischief, would not exist. As to the present point, it may be observed that if wages-earners were assured, on the contrary, that they depended for subsistence on their own honest exertions, they would be diligent in the faithful performance of their stipulated service. In present circumstances, however, 'don't care' would but too commonly express their feelings with regard to their work and their employers. Thus the class which depends on Poor Laws is placed in a position of false independence towards the employing classes. Poor Laws, in fact, as they relax the ties of natural duty and affection, and are injurious in their effects upon morality, so also foster a contempt for relative and social duty, and a spirit of defiance and unruly self-will.[1] The wonder is, not that such effects as these

[1] The effect of Poor Law relief, in alienating the mutual feelings and disorganizing the relations between employers and employed, is

have been produced in perverting and corrupting the population, but that they have not been produced even more extensively.

Among the demoralizing effects of compulosry poor-relief must be mentioned also the various frauds to which it gives occasion. 'The frauds,' says Mr. Chadwick, in the Report of 1834, 'committed in consequence of the facilities which the system of granting *out-door relief* affords are such as these—parties receiving relief as being out of work, being in work; parties who have received relief in consequence of being really out of work continuing to receive relief after they have obtained work; parties who have received out-relief in money on account of illness continuing to receive that relief after they had recovered; women receiving relief on the ground that they have been deserted by their husbands, while their husbands are living with them; women receiving relief for themselves and their family on the pretence that the husband is absent in search of work, while he is absent in full work; persons continuing to receive pensions for children or relatives as if they were alive, when they are dead.'

notably touched upon by the representative of a board of guardians at the Leicester North Midland Conference, to which reference has already been made. 'One of the collateral advantages of the gradual diminution or abolition of out-door relief will be the restoration of something like the old English feeling between employers and employed, which once happily characterised our country, but which has been gradually decaying, and has now become a mere matter of money and not a matter of human feeling between those in a higher and those in a lower position. The present feeling is bad, and will increase under the present system; but if, on the other hand, you bring the poor face to face with the real facts of life, you will gradually restore some of those graces of feeling between man and man which now one sees dying out so rapidly.'—*Report of Conferences*, p. 335.

The evidence of another witness to the frauds to which poor-relief gives rise is as follows:—'All the tricks and deceptions of which man is capable are resorted to, the vilest and most barefaced falsehoods are uttered, and all the worst characteristics of human nature are called into exercise for the purpose of exciting a favourable feeling in their behalf; the children are eye and ear witnesses to all this. The child remembers his father's actions, and the hereditary pauper increases his ranks by instruction as well as by example.' It may indeed be objected that for the success of these fraudulent practices parish-officers are partly to be blamed; but it may be replied that the number of paupers is often so great as to defy the most careful attempts at discrimination. To this point is the evidence of the assistant-overseer in a London parish: 'In such a parish as ours, where we administer relief to upwards of 2,000 poor, it is impossible to prevent fraud, whatever vigilance is exercised.' It may again be objected that this evidence relates to the state of things under the unamended Poor Law; but the answer is that the fraudulent practices in question arise from a practice common to the amended and to the unamended law—the practice of out-door relief. The answer, however, is sufficient, that, according to the Reports of present Poor Law Inspectors, similar frauds are carried on under the amended law. Thus Mr. Longley, a Local Government Inspector, in his Report of 1871–72, speaks of 'the imposition and abuse to which the system of out-door relief is so much exposed.' Another inspector, Mr. Sendall, in his Report for 1873-74, speaking in reference to the dishonest continuance of cases on the out-

door relief list, long after the cause of their relief has ceased, gives the two following examples. 'One of the officers of the Guildford Union came upon a pauper of long standing at work in the well-stocked garden of his cottage. The following dialogue ensued:—

'"You have got a nice bit of garden here?"

'"Yes, it is pretty good."

'"And are those your pigs in the sty there?"

'"Yes; they be mine."

'"And there is a horse and cart, is that yours too?"

'"Oh, yes; that is what I goes to market in. And who be you, sir?"

'"Well, I am the new relieving officer, and I think you had better come up and see the Guardians next board-day."

'It is needless to add that the invitation to meet the Guardians was not accepted, and that the pauper, who had been for some ten years in receipt of parish relief, has been from that day able to maintain himself without assistance from the rates. On another occasion the same officer found a man who had been twenty years in receipt of relief (given in the first instance on account of some bodily infirmity), and who eked out his parish allowance by keeping a mangle, to work which he employed two grown women. A hint to present himself at the Board had the immediate effect of severing the long connection between the parish and this enterprising pauper. It is difficult to write with becoming gravity of cases such as these, which, however, in respect of all essential features, may easily be paralleled in other districts.' The same Inspector refers to the imposition and abuse practised under the orders for dietary medical relief. 'The tickets which are convert-

ible into meat, wine, &c., are also convertible (can it be doubted?) into other things beside them, while the only assurance the relieving officer can have that the wine and meat, when procured, are employed, as directed by the doctor, for the benefit of the patient, is derived from enquiry and observation, in which he may easily be deceived. In town districts especially, abuses arising from this source are of frequent occurrence, the week's supply of meat for the sick child or the grandparent's beef-tea often furnishing the Sunday dinner for the hale members of the family.' Mr. Sendall, in confirmation of his statement, refers his readers to the following testimony of a relieving officer:—'Nobody knows if the patient gets the meat ordered in case of sickness. Believes that in most instances the meat is cooked for the family,' and states the following case:—'A woman, whose husband was dying, received two pounds of beef for beef-tea, ordered by the doctor for the husband. The relieving officer happened to visit the house two hours after, and found all the meat in the frying-pan.' These few instances, taken at random, of a well-known effect of the Poor Law in encouraging fraudulent practices, may serve to impress the reality of that effect more distinctly on our readers' minds. Another Inspector gives the following instance of a kind of fraud practised in regard to the allowances intended for pauper children:—'A woman appeared before the Falmouth Board of Guardians with a child, which she stated to be the illegitimate child of her sister, who had lately died at Truro. She professed to be unwilling to allow the child to be taken into the workhouse, and offered to take care of it if a small allowance of out-door relief

were granted. The guardians granted the relief for three months. Upon enquiry it was ascertained that, as soon as the relief had been ordered, the woman sent back the child to its friends at Truro, and had come herself every week to the relief station and received the relief.' Similar instances are not wanting in Poor Law Inspectors' Reports. Such are the premiums which the Poor Law system offers to practices of fraud, impairing that habit of truthfulness and plain dealing which has characterised our people.

A chronic state of discontent among those who are immediately affected by this system may be properly classed with its demoralising effects. It might perhaps have been anticipated that the provision of a gratuitous maintenance for all who, by whatever cause, were brought to beggary, would have been regarded as a boon. Experience, however, has shown that this provision is regarded not as a boon, but as a right, which in practice is but slenderly recognised by those who administer it. The maintenance granted is apt to create a constant hankering after a more liberal maintenance. 'The greatest paupers are the greatest grumblers;' while, on the other hand, the industrious and prudent wages-earner is generally one of the most contented of men. In fact, a compulsory relief system places the portion of the community from which the relief is drawn, and the portion by which it is received, in a false position together. What the former pay in order to feed, to clothe, to house, to tend in sickness, the latter, is made a matter of supposed right, not of benevolence; a debt, not a favour; and the indigent are strangely enough put in the relation of creditors to an

indefinite amount towards the more prosperous. From the false position in which the two great classes of the payers of poor-rates and the receivers of poor-rates are thus placed towards each other, misunderstandings and inconveniences necessarily arise: antagonistic interests are created—one party is apt to grudge what it must give, the other to be dissatisfied with what it can exact; the one party naturally resisting the vague and fictitious ideas of right which the law suggests to the other party. Suspicion and misgiving are increased on the one side, enmity and discontent on the other.

For example, how often is the negotiation for relief a species of tug, as of two men pulling each at the end of a rope, between the poor law authorities and an enterprising pauper—the latter exerting himself to obtain as much as he can, the former, as in duty bound, to yield no more than they can properly help; the pauper, if he fails of his object, complaining that he has been hardly used, 'turned away like a dog;' but if he gains it, proclaiming the fact as a triumph to his compeers, so that it quickly becomes known throughout the limits of the Union, and incites similar demands, which, if they be not granted, are followed by complaints more or less emphatic of hard usage and unfairness in the distribution of 'parish money,' the rejected applicants pleading that they have as good a right to 'relief' as their more fortunate fellow; and probably they have 'as good a right,' though they have been less successful in asserting it!

A proof that discontent is one of the fruits of the compulsory system of relief is furnished by the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for 1834, who therein give their opinion, founded on evidence, that the Poor

Laws were the chief cause of the agricultural tumults, riots, and rick-burnings, and other outrages of 1830–31; and who inform us that these outbreaks and violences prevailed most '*in those districts in which the Poor Laws were most laxly administered;*' that is, where 'relief' was most extensively given.

On this point the Commissioners speak of 'the notion generated by the indefiniteness of the existing system of relief, that the poor-rates are an inexhaustible fund from which all who call themselves poor are prevented drawing to the extent of their desire only by the cupidity or partiality of parish officers.'[1] A few quotations from the evidence given on this subject to the Commissioners will confirm their assertions. The following question was put by them to witnesses out of various counties, and from the answers given to it two or three selections shall be made. The question was this: 'Can you give the Commissioners any information respecting the causes and consequences of the agricultural riots and burnings of 1830–31?' Witnesses from seven out of fifteen parishes in Bedfordshire, in reply to this question, attribute them to refusal of the amount of relief demanded by the paupers. Witnesses from eight out of twenty-three Berkshire parishes ascribe the excesses committed to maladministration of the Poor Laws. Of witnesses from twenty-one parishes in Bucks., six ascribe them to causes connected with the administration of the Poor Laws. Of witnesses from twenty-nine parishes in Cambridgeshire, twelve ascribe these riots and burnings to the maladministration of the Poor Laws. These specimens of the evidence on the subject may suffice. On

[1] Report, p. 288.

the whole body of evidence on this point the Commissioners thus generalise:—'The result is, that the counties in which the expenditure [in poor-rates] is large are those in which the industry and skill of the labourers are passing away, the connection between master and servant has become precarious, and riots and incendiarism have prevailed. The three counties [Cheshire, Cumberland, and Cornwall] in which it is comparatively small are those in which scarcely any instance of fire or tumult appears to have occurred, in which mutual attachment exists between the workman and his employers,' &c.[1] 'To satisfy,' say these Commissioners, 'the clamours of the undeserving, the general scale of relief is raised, but the ultimate result of such a proceeding appears always to augment the distress which it was intended to mitigate, and to render more fierce the discontent which it was intended to appease. Profuse allowances excite the most extravagant expectations on the part of the claimants, who conceive that an inexhaustible fund is devoted to their use, and that they are wronged to the extent of whatever falls short of their claims. Such relief partakes of the nature of indiscriminate almsgiving in its effects, as a bounty on indolence and vice; but the apparently legal sanction to this parochial almsgiving renders the discontent on denial the most intense.'[2] 'It appears,' continue the Commissioners, 'from all our returns that in every district the discontent of the labouring classes is proportionate to the money distributed in poor-rates or in voluntary charities. . . . In Newbury and Reading

[1] Pages 11 and 12 of Supplement to Report No. 1.

[2] Report of 1834, pp. 49 50.

the money dispensed in poor-rates and charity is as great as could be desired by the warmest advocate either of compulsory or of voluntary relief, and yet during the agricultural riots many of the inhabitants of both towns were under strong apprehensions of the rising of the very people among whom the poor-rates and charities are so profusely distributed. The violence of most of the mobs seemed to have arisen from an idea that all their privations arose from the cupidity or fraud of those entrusted with the management of the fund provided for the poor. Those who work, though receiving good wages, being called poor, and classed with the really indigent, think themselves entitled to a share in the "poor funds." Whatever addition is made to allowances excites the expectation of still further allowances, increases the conception of the extent of the right, and causes proportionate disappointment and hatred if that expectation is not satisfied. On the other hand, wherever the objects of expectation have been made definite, where wages upon the performance of work have been allowed to remain matter of contract, employment has again produced content, and kindness becomes again a source of gratitude.'

It should be borne in mind that these recorded effects of the unamended Poor Law, in fostering discontent, have for us not merely an historical, but also a practical interest, as illustrating the tendencies of a system which, in its main characteristics, still prevails in this country. Discontent, as an effect of compulsory relief, may not now show itself in the same violent form as under the more lavish administration of relief. The feeling nevertheless exists in a smouldering condition,

as anyone may judge who will listen to the comments of a professional pauper on the subject of his relief. A grateful, or even a contented pauper, would be a rare phenomenon. The pauperized class in towns is always forward to swell riotous and seditious mobs, and to join in the destructive doings which often attend such assemblages. The same class in rural districts may always be expected to take part with equal eagerness in agrarian disturbance and outrage.

It is worthy of remark that similar was the effect produced on the minds of the lower class at Paris, by the practice which prevailed under the second Empire, of employing hundreds of thousands of workmen at the public expense. The employment of these multitudes was nothing else than out-door relief in disguise. When this system of public alms and works collapsed, as it must inevitably sooner or later have done, the discontent of the unemployed blazed forth in the violence and excesses of 'the Commune,' and in the burning of streets and buildings by the very hands which had reared them. Such was the effect of this twenty years of virtual out-door relief on a large scale. The granting of it only caused dissatisfaction at its discontinuance, and nurtured in the minds of the recipients the notion that this kind of relief was their right. Such the discontent which resulted from an imperial adventurer's attempts to secure the objects of his ambition by feeding the populace at the expense of the tax-paying public!

Looking at these facts, the writer cannot but express regret that some gentlemen, echoing apparently a remark recently dropped by the Right Honourable W. E. Forster, should have suggested that the tro ıbles which

have agitated the Continent at times during the last thirty or more years were owing to the want of Poor Laws, and that through the possession of such laws our own country during that period has enjoyed a comparative calm. Is there not such a fallacy as 'post hoc ergo propter hoc'? A consequent is not necessarily an effect, an antecedent is not necessarily a cause. But in our own, as in every other national community, are there not latent elements of mischief ready to break out at any given opportunity? It is impossible to look at periodicals, the peculiar politics of which are popular with the lower grades, without concluding that there prevails among them a great amount of hostility to institutions, possibly as great as the amount which would have existed in the absence of Poor Laws. As it is said, that 'the earth is founded on the seas, and prepared upon the floods,' its very foundation being instability, so it is true that a national community at its best estate but rests on a sleeping volcano with forces beneath, which may at any time burst forth and confound or disturb the social order. Amongst ourselves these forces are kept under only by the firm pressure of the law-abiding portion of the community. Their occasional eruption, however, takes place in every community, and still more often the ominous threatenings which precede it are heard. Liability to commotion is one of the conditions of the existence of political society; and the absence of Poor Law no more causes this liability than the existence of Poor Law is a guarantee against it. So we may judge from our own history between the years 1815 and 1866. When Poor Relief was in its palmiest days, there were discontents, Luddite riots, outrages,

breaking of machines, in 1816 and the following years, the demagogue Hunt's formidable gatherings of disaffected multitudes for political purposes, quelled not without bloodshed, as at Peterloo in 1819; the discontents and violence of the London mobs in 1820 on a feigned pretext, with the various and dangerous combinations of that time; and the agrarian riots and destructions of 1830–1, occurring, as we have mentioned, proportionably in those very districts where the Poor Law was most liberally administered, and its supposed sedative power was most fully put to the proof. These internal disturbances were not prevented by the Poor Law, nor were the alarms of London in the autumn of 1830, and the Reform-riots and violent excesses with bloodshed and conflagration of mansions, streets and property in 1831–2, as at Bristol and Nottingham; nor the Chartist tumults and armed insurrections in South Wales, and at the Birmingham Bull-ring and elsewhere in the country, in 1838 and the following years; nor the seditious assemblage of insurrectionary thousands in Kent in 1838, gathered together in arms against the Poor Law Act, and at length put down only by military aid, and with the loss of lives; nor the 'black mutinous discontent' and hostile feeling shown by the masses in 1847–8 towards the institutions of the country and the higher classes, of which a memorable proof was given when London was 'frightened out of its propriety,' and took an attitude of armed defence, in April 1848; nor the minor Reform-tumults by which London was alarmed in 1865. That these demonstrations and outbreaks went no further than they did, was an escape for which the country had to thank, not the

performers in them, but the determined attitude of the middle classes, and the fidelity of soldiery and police, in supporting the Government, and maintaining the supremacy of the law. The introduction of Poor Law into Ireland cannot be said to have had any effect in allaying the spirit of disaffection which has often since, just as before, manifested itself in that country, or in preventing the various disturbances and seditious proceedings which have there taken place. And Mr. Forster, and those who have repeated him, might fairly be asked this question, viz., If, from any cause, a public disturbance were to break out in England to-morrow, would those persons among the population who are in receipt, or in willing anticipation, of poor relief, be *less* likely to join in such disturbance than others who are not thus either actually or mentally pauperized? If the pauperized numbers are not *less* likely than others to join in it—and the assertion would hardly be made that they are so—what becomes of the supposition that Poor Laws in effect allay discontented feeling, and so prevent its subversive consequences?

Against the authority of Mr. W. E. Forster and those who seem to have echoed his opinion, that Poor Laws prevent discontent, we may fairly set the following remarks of the late sagacious author of 'The Original,' whose experience, first in a private, and afterwards in an official capacity, was great, in dealing with pauperism. 'When the demand for labour falls below the average, the *improvident* part of the working classes are the most turbulent and clamorous, and the readiest tools in the hands of the factious and designing. The first fruits of improvidence, when soured by bad seasons,

are riot and sedition. A provident population is the best calculated to resist unjustifiable aggression, and an improvident one to commence it.' This author elsewhere in his pages dilates on the tendency of Poor Laws to promote improvidence; hence it follows that, in his view, Poor Laws foment instead of preventing discontent.

The supposition, indeed, may he advanced, that but for the Poor Laws a still *greater* amount of turbulence might have been displayed in England, and even in Ireland, than we have unfortunately witnessed. What might have been, is however a very uncertain matter of speculation, wholly incapable of proof. We only know that Poor Laws have not prevented, in the two countries as a whole, a great amount of turbulence, which, but for the intervention of other agencies, would have led to the most disastrous and deplorable results; and it is a purely gratuitous assumption that, in the absence of poor laws, such results would have taken place.

The contrary assertion of the present writer, that a spirit of discontent is fostered by our Poor Law, seems more consonant with the facts which he has now adduced in quotations from the Commissioners' Report and in references to our recent annals.

Of the peculiar tendency of legal relief to destroy self-respect and self-dependence, a striking illustration is given in the just observation of a witness, that 'even the least contact with parochial assistance seems to be degrading.' This observation is confirmed by the testimony of many persons of experience, which was given to the Poor Law Commissioners.[1] One of

[1] See pp. 93, 94, of Report, 1834.

these witnesses, a magistrate and landowner, the late highly and deservedly respected Mr. Raymond Barker, of Hambledon, Bucks., says:—'In the year 1821 there were two labourers who were reported to me as extremely industrious men, maintaining large families; neither of them had applied for parish relief. I thought it was advisable that they should receive some mark of public approbation, and we gave them 1*l.* a piece from the parish. Very shortly they both became applicants for relief, and have continued so ever since. I am not aware that any other cause existed for this change in the conduct of these two men than the above-mentioned gratuity.'

Another witness, who had been much versed in the administration of the Poor Law, thus expresses himself to the same point:—'I can decidedly state, as the result of my experience, that when once a family has received relief, it is to be expected that their descendants for some generations will receive it also.'

But the candid statement of a third witness is even more decisive as to the well-nigh infallible power of parish-relief to break down the strongest feeling of honest independence and self-respect:—'The change'—it is the evidence of a former overseer of an East London parish—'that is made in the character and habits of the poor by *once* receiving parochial relief, is quite remarkable: they are demoralized ever afterwards. I remember the case of a family named Wintle, consisting of a man, his wife, and five children. About two years ago the father, mother, and two children were very ill, and reduced to great distress, being obliged to sell all their little furniture for their subsistence. I

went to them to offer relief; they, however, strenuously refused the aid. I reported this to the churchwarden, who determined to accompany me, and together we again pressed upon the family the necessity of receiving relief; but still they refused, and we could not prevail upon them to accept our offer. We felt so much interested in the case, however, that we sent them four shillings in a parcel with a letter, desiring them to apply for more if they continued ill; this they did, and from that time to this (now more than two years) I do not believe that they have been for three weeks off our books, although there has been little or no ill-health in the family. Thus we effectually spoiled the habits acquired by their previous industry, and I have no hesitation in saying that in nine cases out of ten, such is the effect of having once tasted of parish bounty. This applies as much to the young as to the middle-aged, and as much to the middle-aged as to the old. I state it confidently, as the result of my experience, that, if once a young lad gets a pair of shoes given him by the parish, he never afterwards lays by sufficient to buy a pair; so, if we give to the fathers or mothers of children clothing or other assistance, they invariably apply again and again.'

'The regular applicants for relief are generally of one family; the disease is hereditary, and when once a family has applied for relief, they are pressed down for ever.' With regard to the hereditary nature of pauperism, parish-lists exhibit, we are told, the names of families who for generations have been in receipt of parish relief, and who may be traced back respectively to the ancestral founders of their transmissive pauperism. 'In

country places,' says the experienced author of 'The Original,' 'especially where there are no great changes, it will often be found that the principal part of the poor-rates is paid to a few families, who have been in the habit of depending upon them from the remotest periods to which the accounts go back, and who think they have acquired as good a title to the parish-fund as the landowners have to their estates.' The same hereditary character attaches to pauperism in London. It is stated by an enlightened and zealous labourer in behalf of the London poor, the late Mr. Edward Denison, that in the East of London there are families in whom pauperism has been so hereditary, that they are ignorant of any honest method of obtaining a livelihood, and have succeeded to a state of abject dependence on the parish and on charitable doles.

Yet another testimony shall be given to the degrading effects of Poor Law relief:—'Whether in work or out of work, when they once become paupers, it can only be by a sort of miracle that they can be broken off.'

From all this evidence it appears that a single reception of parish-relief is like having been once in a prison, rendering the subject of it insensible to a repetition of the disgrace. 'Once a pauper always a pauper,' and often, it may be added, the progenitor of a line of paupers. It would seem, in fact, that, when a victory has been once gained over any feeling of shame at receiving gratuitously what is after all an extortion from the means of other people, no further reluctance is felt in the matter. One draught of the Circean cup of parish-relief takes away all manly feelings of reliance upon self-help!

Even the anticipation of public relief is a powerful agent in the destruction of self-respect. Thus highly-skilled workmen, in receipt of proportionable wages, will look forward with complacency amid their reckless self-indulgence to an ultimate state of dependence on that relief. While these pages were being written, the author heard from an eminent member of the Statistical Society the following casual anecdote of his own personal experience, illustrative of the above statement.—He had taken a watch which needed repair to one of the first makers in London, and as it was of much importance to its owner in keeping his engagements, he stipulated that it should be ready on a certain early day agreed upon by the watchmaker. The owner called for his watch on the appointed day, and was surprised to be told that it was not ready. He reminded the watchmaker of his promise, which the latter frankly admitted, but alleged in justification that the mechanic to whom the repair of the watch had been entrusted had failed to bring it back as he had promised. 'When I asked him,' said the watchmaker, 'why he had not kept his promise, he carelessly answered that "he had been taking a holiday." 'Indeed,' I rejoined, 'and if this is the way in which you keep your engagements with your employers, what do you expect will become of you when you are not able to work?' The man replied with perfect unconcern, that "he supposed he should end his days at the *Big House*."' That this language, even of a highly-skilled mechanic, is not an unusual instance of the same insensibility in the whole class, will be admitted by all who have had due opportunities of observation. Of this insensibility in regard to the shame

of wilful pauperism, we have proof on a large scale, when a number of well-paid workers in a particular industry are by a depression of trade thrown out of employment, and when an instant wail of distress is heard throughout the country, and the ratepayers of the locality are made to suffer.

It has been observed that 'poor relief is an apparent benefit which imposes no sacrifice except a sensation of shame, quickly obliterated by habit, even if not prevented by example.' In fact, these laws have the effect of effacing from the wages-earner's mind that regard for the rightful interests of others, and that sense of manly honour, which would co-operate to keep him from deliberately throwing himself as a burden upon the property of his neighbours. This want of self-respect, amounting to abjectness of feeling, induced, no doubt, by the debasing practices of pauperism, is lamentably shown in the expectation and ready acceptance of gratuities by persons of the humbler class, without service rendered or pressure of distress, from better-to-do persons coming into contact with them. Thus the district visitor, or the clergyman in making his pastoral calls, is mainly looked to as a distributor of shillings; and it seems that such persons can hardly hope to exert an influence for good in their visits without the recommendation of the preliminary dole. In other and non-pauperized countries, gratuitous money will seldom be accepted by persons in the humblest positions, excepting professional mendicants. Thus, the casual visitor to an Irish cabin would hurt the self-respect of the inmates by offering the gratuity which would on a similar occasion be readily accepted in an English cottage; nor

would the poor Frenchman or Spaniard feel gratified by such an offer.

The inroad which the reception of the Poor-Law dole makes on self-respect is seen from another point of view. Even when an applicant's necessity arises from mere misfortune (a rare case) he will, of course, be classed as a pauper with those applicants whose necessity has been caused by their own misconduct. Hence in his case is the distinction effaced between honest, unavoidable poverty which has a real claim upon compassionate help, and poverty which is the result of wilful act. Both cases, though differing as the poles, must be treated alike, and placed in the same category; and poverty and pauperism become convertible terms. In being thus classed, the honest, industrious, and prudent, though unfortunate man, suffers unmerited disgrace, and receives the impression that he is lowered in the estimation of the world, which is a long step towards the loss of his own self-respect; for men are very apt to become what they are set down for, and to prove reckless in conduct, when they have no longer a character or a decent social status to keep up.

Nor are these reluctant recipients of compulsory relief the only respectable class which of necessity are made to suffer disgrace by the operation of the Poor Law system. That system discredits the whole handworking population, by bringing it down towards the same level in public estimation with the pauperized portion of it. And to discredit is usually to demoralise.

I proceed to speak, lastly, of the most patent and striking of all the instances of the demoralization occasioned by the Poor Law. It is out of place here to

speak of the *material* loss incurred by all the wages-earning population through excessive self-indulgence in the use of alcoholic liquors. The remark, however, shall be made, by the way, that the amount of the wages annually spent by them in drink, beyond what is useful for recruiting their strength, or even allowable for their temperate enjoyment, exceeds by many times the 8,000,000*l.* which is the present annual amount of the Poor Law expenditure. It follows therefore that if, as a class, they abstained from drinking beyond the afore-mentioned reasonable limits, they would be able to dispense with the aid of Poor Laws. The 8,000,000*l.*, and a great deal more, which they would thus save might largely add to the comfort of themselves and their families; while, as we have contended, the expenditure of this amount in what is called their 'relief' is, in its effects, hostile to their material comfort no less than to their moral and social welfare.

The large proportion of public revenue derived from the customs and excise on wine and spirits, and from the malt tax, and, it may be added, the flourishing condition of the great brewing interest throughout the kingdom, may be regarded as fair indices of the amount of wages spent in buying alcoholic liquor. In a well-informed article in 'Macmillan's Magazine' for December, 1875, entitled, 'The Drinking System; its effects on national prosperity and the rate of wages,' it is estimated that 140,000,000*l.* are annually spent in this country in the purchase of liquor. This estimate was amply confirmed by Mr. Rathbone, M.P., in his 'Lecture to Working Men,' at Liverpool, an account of which was reprinted in a former page of this work. If

then the correctness of this estimate be assumed, and if it be further assumed that twenty of these millions of pounds are spent in liquor by the non-wages-earning classes and their households, it will follow that a hundred and twenty millions are annually spent by the wages-earning classes in this species of luxury.

It is unnecessary to dilate upon the prevalence of excessive drinking in this country—of the crime, the disease, the insanity of which it is the cause; to speak of the destitution and degradation which it entails upon the wives and children of those who practise this vice, and of the destruction of self-respect and of natural affection involved in the practice; to speak of wages, sometimes above the average incomes of more than one of the professions, not applied to the comfortable maintenance of families, nor to prudent purposes of economy, nor yet to the support of sick or aged relatives, but consumed in this sensual form of self-indulgence. Examples of extravagance and excess in drinking are but too familiar to the public. One example, however, shall be given which lately came under the writer's notice. At a meeting on the public-house question a speaker of known veracity said 'he had known a navvy, a fine fellow too, who, when working on the railway, earned as much as 2*l.* 2*s.*, 2*l.* 10*s.*, and even 3*l.* per week. He used to send home for rent, wife and family, 18*s.* per week, and spent the rest in drink, often getting rid of the surplus by Monday morning.' The chairman of the meeting 'had read in a paper the other day that a gentleman, travelling on the continent, said that he had never seen a drunken person, but on returning to this country, whilst driving to his own home from the

railway station, he passed fourteen drunken persons.'

We are told by the leading journal that 'the general rise of wages throughout the country has given the working-classes more than ever the means of indulging in their favourite enjoyment.' And what makes all this indulgence possible? Manifestly the fact that we have laws interfering with the natural working of things—laws which teach the drinker that it matters not, as regards a maintenance in time to come, how much he wastes his substance in his accustomed self-indulgence, but that when disease sets in or work flags, or accident happens, or old age comes on, the public will maintain him. For it can hardly be doubted that the expenditure of wages in drink is encouraged by the certainty of provision against any of those contingencies which may preclude the earning of wages. Men will always be more inclined to squander their means in self-gratification when they have a guarantee against ultimate destitution. Hence it may be concluded, and abundant facts strengthen the conclusion, that the squandering of wages in drink which prevails in England is in great measure due to the existence of such a guarantee in the form of poor law relief. And if this form of prodigality prevails, as it is stated, to a still greater degree among the traditionally thriftier population of Scotland, the fact may be ascribed to the more general granting of this relief in its more popular form, that of out-door relief, since the comparatively recent introduction of Poor Laws into that county. 'Of this excess,' says Mr. Walker, in his 'Original,' 'crime or the parish is the resource;' and the anticipation of this latter

resource must greatly encourage the excess. It must however be borne in mind that, though this anticipation is the purport of their reckless conduct, it is not always consciously so. The prospect of poor relief in the end may not be present in all cases to the mind of the man who wastes his wages in drink or other self-indulgence. In such a case he has but caught the infection of that recklessness, which has been diffused through his class by the traditions and practices of pauperism. It is indeed to the indirect influence of the Poor Law on the *morale* of the population that much of the prevailing improvidence and excess is owing.

The connection of drinking with pauper laws and pauperism is worthy of notice. These laws appear to encourage drinking, and again drinking is a fertile cause of pauperism. Of the 119 Governors of Workhouses whose opinions were obtained as to the effect of drinking in producing pauperism, some estimated that one-half of our paupers had been made such by drinking, while their average estimate was that seventy-three in a hundred of our paupers had been made such by that cause. Thus, then, Poor Laws encourage drinking, and drinking may be regarded as a chief cause of pauperism.

It is not uncommon, indeed, to point to the 'miserable,' the 'squalid' condition, the deficient accommodation, of the houses of many of our wages-earners, as accounting for their prevalent habit of excess in the consumption of intoxicating liquors. Thus, for example, at a temperance meeting lately held at Consett, in the county of Durham, one of the speakers, manager of the

local iron-works, stated that 'one in forty of the people of that county had during the last twelve months been convicted of drunkennes;' and he then went on to express a belief that 'the drinking habits of the county were owing in great measure to the want of comfortable homes for working men.'[1] Now, in the oft-recurring statements of this kind, it seems to be forgotten that the discomfort of these homes is very much owing to the habits of the inmates of them. Possibly material disorder may react detrimentally on the moral order by impairing self-respect, health, and cheerfulness; but for the most part it is the moral order which is the parent of the material order. That the intemperance of our people is owing to the squalor and discomfort of their dwellings appears to be a truly preposterous supposition, putting the effect for the cause, and the cause for the effect. The intemperate habits of the men are often laid to the charge of their wives, who, by the uncleanliness and disorder which they permit in their homes, are said to 'drive their husbands to the public-house.' Yet so great is the plasticity of the female nature that the conduct of most wives must in great measure be shaped by the conduct of their husbands. The intemperance, and therefore wastefulness, of these men not only leaves their wives without the means of maintaining domestic comfort, but also induces in them an habitual dejection of mind, a benumbing sense of helplessness, and consequently an indifference to domestic economy, arrangement, 'tidiness,' and all the seemly, not to say decorative, surroundings of daily life. If the husbands were temperate and devoted to the

[1] *Pall Mall Gazette*, Jan. 4, 1876

purposes of house-keeping the sums now expended in excess, their wives would be better house-wives, and their homes would be more comfortable. Their intemperate habits may more reasonably be traced not to the slovenliness of their wives and the ill condition of their homes, but to their anticipatory dependence on a gratuitous maintenance in time of need, and their consequent proneness to spend their means in present gratification.

The intemperance, however, of these wages-earners is laid to the charge not only of their wives, but also of the owners of their tenements, when these owners have not provided sufficient accommodation for their tenants, or have not kept their tenements in good repair. It may, in passing, be asked whether it be just towards the owners of house property, of any description, to dictate to them the dimensions to which their houses shall extend, or the state of repair in which they shall be kept. These matters must surely be left to the ability or will of the owners, and will form an important ingredient in their contracts with their tenants. In some cases house-owners cannot, in some other cases they will not, help the narrowness or disrepair of the tenements which they let; and no power can with justice put them to the expense of enlarging or repairing their own property.

But even where they have provided more spacious accommodation, their tenants constantly forego the opportunity of greater comfort at their homes by crowding the added space with an overflowing number of lodgers. To ascribe to the house-owners the narrowness of *such* persons' house accommodation is as reason-

able as it would be to ascribe the wandering habits of gipsies to their want of houses to live in, when in truth, if they had houses, they would prefer not to live in them.

It may here also be mentioned that to the same physical cause—deficient accommodation in smaller tenements—it has been the fashion to ascribe much of what is specially called the immorality, as well as of the intemperance, of the class which inhabits them. To take one from among the many examples of this theory of causation which have come under the notice of the writer—at an agriculturists' meeting, held in Dorsetshire in October 1876, a speaker, himself a landowner, after inveighing against 'the cruelty of landlords in providing such cottages as the poor dwell in, the wretched accommodation and crowding of their habitations,' went on to attribute to these habitations 'the immorality of the inhabitants.' A poet, too, expresses the same sentiment in his way—

> Our daughters, with base-born babies,
> Have wandered away to their shame;
> If your misses had slept, Squire, where they did,
> Your misses might do the same.

To account thus for English immorality is to ignore the physical surroundings of the Irish peasantry in their homes. Bad houses there do not cause bad morals. How little after all can the dimensions or condition of people's dwellings have to do with the principles of the inmates as regards temperance or other virtue! Little, indeed, in comparison with the influences of law and of traditional custom originating in law.

The prevalence of drunkenness is by some ascribed

in effect to the absence of laws prohibiting the sale of alcoholic liquors. Surely, however, to enact such laws would be to begin at the wrong end. This would be to aim simply at stopping the supply of such liquors; but where the demand for them exists, the supply will not easily be prevented; and it is the Poor Law which favours this demand. The torrent of drunkenness cannot be dammed up by legislative enactments; but its source may be very much dried up by removing enactments which assist the conversion of wages into liquor. People cannot be made temperate by Act of Parliament, but a check may be given to intemperance by repealing a law which favours it.

Altogether, in looking at the numerous explanations which are suggested for the mischiefs wrought by our Poor Law, including much of the prevailing drunkenness, one might suppose that there were a general conspiracy to 'blink' the true cause of them, and to lay them to any other cause than that. Now it is bad houses, now bad wives, now it is the great number of public-houses or the existence of any public-houses, or, as we saw before, it is the bad example of the higher classes, or it is the fault of 'society,' or it is even 'misrule and oppression'! This determination to fix upon something else on which to lay the effects of the Poor Law system resembles the attempts of the soliloquizing gourmand, as represented by a late celebrated comedian, to account to his own satisfaction for the indigestion from which he was suffering after one of his dinners. He goes through, as he lies awake, its various dishes, and after the mention of each, pronounces, 'It could not be that,' till at last he recollects

a piece of pie-crust to which he thought he could attribute his distress, and was heard frequently during the night exclaiming, in piteous tone, 'Oh, that pie-crust!' Similar was the way in which a London alderman in bygone times explained the fit which carried off one of his brother aldermen after a corporation feast: 'He swallowed one grape, which turned cold upon his stomach!'

The fact is, as the writer, in concurrence with many authorities, contends, that the Poor Laws are hostile to temperance no less than they have been shown to be hostile to continence, to chastity, to the observance of relative and social duty, to contentment, to self-respect, and manly self-dependence.

An ancient historian mentions the effect in breaking the independent spirit of a brave people, produced through the introduction of vicious and luxurious habits by their conquerors. It might safely be said that a conquering people, desirous of weakening the moral fibre of a half-subdued and recalcitrant population, could hardly take a more effectual course than to establish among them a liberal system of compulsory poor relief. An Anglo-Indian who had been twenty-five years in the Civil Service, in which he held a distinguished position, stated his opinion to the writer that the introduction of our Poor Law into India would entirely debase the character of its population. Well, then, might Professor Fawcett observe, in his 'Lectures on Pauperism;' that 'the legal claim which everyone in this country possessed to be maintained out of the rates, represents perhaps the most perilous responsibility ever assumed by a nation. Some of our leading statesmen,' continues he, 'endeavour to alarm us with the risk incurred by

the promise to defend the independence of a neighbouring nation. But what is the danger thus incurred compared with the perils involved in the promise to maintain all the pauperism that can be called into existence by encouraging indolence, and by rewarding, instead of punishing, those who recklessly indulge their passions? England was brought nearer to the brink of ruin by the old Poor Law than she ever was by a hostile army. . . . Fully admitting that the Act of 1834 introduced many improvements, it cannot be denied that pauperism still exists to a most alarming extent. Much of the evil influence exerted by the old Poor Law upon the general social condition of the country still continues in operation.'

It is a striking evidence of the demoralizing influences of our Poor Laws when the leading journal, depending, like all other journals, on public favour, can make the following plain-spoken comments on the conduct and condition of the classes in question:—'With all the vast increase of their wages, the working classes as a body have done nothing to improve their condition. They are not better dressed, nor better housed, nor better educated than they were. They eat more, they drink more, and grumble more, but they work less. They do not provide for old age, or for their poor relations; but as soon as work flags, or illness sets in, or old age comes on, they put in their claim for Poor Law relief, which has been all along paid by the classes whom they revile, and whom they have done their best to injure.'

Still more recently the same journal thus expresses itself on the social condition of these classes in connec-

tion with the Poor Law. After speaking of 'the habitual and incurable dependence of our working classes,' it continues:—'In many agricultural villages two-thirds of the population are paupers from their very birth, without the capacity, the thought, or the wish to provide for themselves beyond the present day in any matters whatever, in which prudence is exercised. They are always ready to throw themselves, their wives and children, their fathers and mothers, their brothers and sisters, on the rates. The men who redeem their class have almost unanimously agreed to use the burden on the rates as one of the weapons of their cause. As in barbarous times, armies would sometimes thrust their women and children before them into battle, thinking their enemies possibly softer-hearted than themselves, so the Agricultural Unions tell the landowners and farmers that, if they will not increase their wages, they will throw their wives and children upon their support. . . . . Even when we come to towns of a few thousand inhabitants, many of them are as pauperized as the villages.'[1]

It would seem that some great deterioration has taken place, during the last twenty years, in the character of those classes, concurrently with the relaxation of Poor-Law administration; for assuredly such language as the above is very different from the high-flown language then commonly held by journalists and public men, concerning the virtues and merits which had been discovered in the 'British workman.' For, indeed, there was a habit with the better-to-do and educated classes to talk of and treat the 'British work-

[1] *Times*, May 18, 1877.

man' almost as though he were a heroic personage newly appeared in the world; and his commentators seemed to forget that he was just what any one of themselves would have been had he been changed in his cradle.

This flattery, it may in passing be observed, must have tended powerfully to encourage in their weaknesses and vices the class to which it has been addressed, both by self-seeking and by sentimental writers and speakers; just as the humouring a wayward child, and calling him a 'good boy,' has the effect of increasing his untoward propensities. Not less luscious than the praises with which Oriental potentates are usually regaled, it has so much vitiated their mental taste, that, as the 'Journeyman Engineer,'[1] himself one of the class, has informed us, they will be pleased with no address that is not well sweetened with this ingredient! However, demoralization, owing, as is here contended, very much to Poor Law influences, has so deeply tainted the domestic life of this class, that a Poor Law Inspector, in his report on the 'boarding-out' system, can notice the extreme difficulty of finding homes, whether in town or village, sufficiently pure and well-ordered for the reception of children whom their parents have left to the care of the parish.[2] Readers will remember the picture which one of our leading public men,[3] at a fearless risk of popularity, drew of the social condition of the class which is subject to the immediate operation of these

[1] 'Our New Masters.'

[2] Rev. Dr. Clutterbuck's Report for 1874–5, pp. 220–222.

[3] The Right Hon. Robert Lowe, M.P.: 'Ignorant, violent, venal, and drunken.'

influences. The testimony of the author of 'Our New Masters' is not less decisive. 'The home life,' says he, 'of a vast number of the working classes is something simply horrible. The bringing up of the children is perhaps the most horrible feature of all in this matter. The sexes mingle together promiscuously; and as not only are they not taught anything of morality, but immorality, both in word and deed, is openly practised among them, the result is that many, very many of them, are physically as well as morally corrupted while yet mere children.' 'The condition of our labouring classes, agricultural and urban,' says Dr. Clutterbuck, the Poor Law Inspector above mentioned, 'is such as to create serious alarm in any thoughtful mind.' Such Is the corruption generated between poverty and vice in this wealthy and charitable country!

But not in this country alone have the pauperizing and demoralizing effects of compulsory relief been exhibited. The same effects are seen in the contemporary history of two other European countries. It appears from the Report on 'Poor Laws in Foreign Countries,' published the year before last by the Local Government Board, that in Sweden, before the year 1871, a system of Poor Law, bearing some likeness to our own system, was in operation. We are, therefore, not surprised to read in this Report, that 'in 1833 the number of poor had increased in proportion to the population,' and that there was 'an enormous increase of pauperism and expenditure;' or to find it stated, that in 1833, under that system, 'the Swedish artisan is neither so industrious or frugal as formerly; he has heard that the destitute able-bodied are in England supported by the parish; he

claims similar relief, and *alleges his expectation of it as an excuse for prodigality or indifference to saving.*' It is stated also that 'there was a time further back in the history of Sweden when each family sustained its destitute and impotent, and would have deemed it a shame to receive support from others.' This disastrous system of Poor-Relief which grew up in Sweden underwent, in 1871, a legislative rectification, somewhat after the model of our new law of 1834, only more thorough. Under its unamended Poor Law it would seem that intemperance, as well as laxity of morals, prevailed in Sweden to an extent scarcely, if at all, surpassed in any other European country, not excepting even England itself.

In another Scandinavian kingdom, Denmark, where a general 'right' to relief is given by law, pauperism became so prevalent that it was found necessary, in 1869, to appoint a Royal Commission 'to consider the whole question of public relief.' The Report of this Commission 'advises the literal restriction of public relief to such persons as are actually unable to work;' and a Government Bill, embodying this provision, was expected to be submitted to the Danish legislature. The Consul, however, who makes this statement, adds:— 'Whatever Bill be introduced, the democratic agricultural majority of the Folkething will assuredly insist on large modifications suited to the view which the agrarian mind takes of its own specific interests.'[1] I would here mention that the effect of the present Poor Law in Denmark is exemplified by two significant facts, that in the principal Copenhagen workhouse '6,000 quarts

[1] Report on 'Foreign Poor Laws,' p. 135.

of brandy are annually sold to the inmates, and tobacco for above 1,000 dollars;' and that 'in 1867 about half the inmates absconded with property and clothes belonging to the establishment.'[1] The effect which a lax system of poor-relief has produced in Denmark is thus described by Count Holstein, as quoted in the Report on Foreign Poor Laws:—'The dread of poverty is diminished, and he who is half poor works less instead of more. Those who are young and capable of labour are less economical, always having the poor-rates in view as a resource against want; labourers' marriages are contracted with much less forethought or consideration as to consequences.'

Such are the demoralizing and pauperizing effects which are wrought by the principle of compulsory relief in other countries than England, wherever it is in force.

On the other hand, in countries into which it has not been introduced, such as France, Luxembourg, and Holland, the expenditure of earnings in intoxicating liquors, and in other forms of self-indulgence, is comparatively moderate; and we find, on the contrary, frugal and contented populations. Small, indeed, must be the expenditure of the French peasantry in self-indulgence of any kind, when their Government could satisfy, by means of their accumulations, a large part of the Prussian war-exactions!

To sum up the effects which, according to the copious testimony above cited, as well as the results of daily observation and experience, are wrought upon the most numerous class of the nation by a system of compulsory

[1] P. 133 of 'Foreign Poor Law Report.'

relief, it may be asserted that the system is harmful to the material interests, the social condition, the moral order of the class in question; increasing poverty and its attendant miseries, encouraging improvidence, discouraging the opposite virtue, relaxing the obligations of the family tie, lowering self-respect, breaking down honest independence, fostering discontent and a spirit of lawless self-will, and taking away the fear of those consequences which would operate as deterrents from idleness, from immorality specially so called, and from intemperance.

SECTION V.

EFFECT OF THE POOR LAW ON CLASSES ABOVE.

SUCH is the manifold mischief inflicted by our Poor-Law system on the classes which depend upon it; but its ill effects in a social as well as in a material point of view extend to other classes. How, indeed, can a system of law injuriously affect the most numerous class of a community without bringing harm upon other classes? The system in question operates injuriously not only on wages-earners and paupers, but on other classes also, by contracting their sympathies in regard to the condition of the real and deserving poor. Political economists have noticed this effect (as they say) in narrowing the hand of private charity.' This effect of the system will be produced not only on persons in easier circumstances, but still more on that numerous class of rate-payers who may, by an addition to local burdens, be reduced from the position of poor's rate-payers to that of pensioners on the poor's-rates. 'For the weight of the poor's rate falls, to a great extent, upon the shoulders of persons whose condition is but little removed above that of those for whose relief they are taxed; and every additional penny which is added

to the burden of local taxation must be the means of bringing on the poor's-rates many of those who were previously living upon the verge of pauperism.'[1] What, then, must be the effect of such taxation in blunting *their* sympathies towards the distressed? What room can it leave to them for the exercise of active benevolence? The poor-tax is paid with grudging, as its proceeds are received without thanks. Compulsory relief is the opposite of 'the quality of mercy, which is not strained;' it is the opposite of being 'twice blessed;' it has the opposite effect to that of 'blessing him that gives and him that takes;' for it contracts the heart of the givers, and it tends to the detriment of the receivers.

The notion that indigence is permitted to exist, in order to call forth the benevolent feelings of the more prosperous, is a probable doctrine of the metaphysics of poverty. But these feelings enter not into compulsory relief, and are even checked by it. The man who contributes to it knows that his contribution is all loss to himself, and no gain to others. He has no heart in it. Beneficence, on the contrary, is encouraged by its own exercise. It in no wise impoverishes the man who duly exerts it. He 'scatters, and yet increases.' But relief given under compulsion has no such blessing, and involves no generous action, recoiling to the advantage of the doer. Even among the classes themselves who in their need look to this relief, the accessibility of it, superseding the necessity of mutual neighbourly help, must tend to check that reciprocation of kindly affection which is fostered by the interchange of good offices. A

[1] Mr. Wodehouse's Poor Law Report for 1871–2.

legal refuge in the 'parish' being open to them all, those who might help their fellows in distress would be inclined to leave them to that resource, while those who needed help would prefer demanding it as 'a right from the parish to soliciting it as a favour from their neighbours. But upon the well-to-do classes the effects of this system of legal relief are manifest, in furnishing them with an escape from the trouble of caring for the poor of their respective neighbourhoods, and in favouring the propensity of the rich and refined to 'hide themselves from their own flesh,' to shun sights and recitals of suffering, as disturbing to the smooth flow of their own sensations. There being for the relief of destitution a regular tax, which falls upon themselves in proportion to their means, they are prone to leave the destitute to the official dispensers of its proceeds, to Boards of Guardians and Relieving Officers. Poor Laws, in fact, exist in apparent behoof of the selfish and indolent rich, as well as in that of the self-indulgent and improvident poor. With rate-payers not of the wealthier order the ready answer to requests, however well-grounded, for aid from their neighbours in distress would be, 'Go to the parish; we pay poor-rates for the like of you already.'

The following incident, which was lately brought to the knowledge of the present writer, may serve to illustrate signally the effect of the Poor Law in checking the action of kindly sympathy on the part of employers towards those who work for them. An agricultural labourer in the North, engaged by the year to work for the occupier and proprietor of a farm of 300 acres, fell from the top of a loaded waggon in working for his

employer, and received injuries which proved fatal. On his death, this employer wrote to the overseer of the parish, 'to ask if the Board of Guardians would not pay for a coffin, as there would be no means of getting one made.' To the widow, who was left with five young children, and without resource, this employer not only gave no pecuniary aid, but in 'settling up' with her for her deceased husband's wages, he took from her a half-penny, his change! Had there been no 'parish' to which application could be made in such a case, it is probable that mere natural good feeling, or even a sense of shame, would have prompted the employer to show some liberality.

In fact, by the existence of poor rates, to which they themselves contribute, the churlishly disposed have an excuse given them for their illiberality, and are made proof against all feeling of shame at displaying it. And it is a well-known characteristic of most men that they will often give cheerfully what they would grudge to part with on compulsion. Thus, the application for aid from a relative or friend in difficulties, or the accustomed visit from the agent of a favoured charity, is received with more cordiality than the visit of the poor-rate collector; and, we may add, that were it not for the 'demand note' of that functionary, would often be received with still more cordiality and a fuller response! In fact, free will is of the essence of beneficence, which vanishes at the approach of constraint, and so resembles a certain passion, as Pope personifies it, which

> Free as air, at sight of human ties
> Spreads his light wings and in a moment flies.

Nor should it be forgotten that the reckless cha-

racter stamped on the lower grades by the prevalence of pauperism tends greatly to alienate from them the sympathies of richer people. When earners of high wages are seen to squander them, as, under the debasing influence of the Poor-Law system, they do squander them, in mere sensual self-indulgence, persons of the better-to-do order are necessarily inclined to listen with coldness to tales of pecuniary distress, and to ascribe that distress to the improvidence which had cast to the winds all thought of the adverse contingencies of life. 'They have eaten and drunk away their wages, and now that they are in want they ask us to relieve them.' Such is the sentiment naturally suggested to the minds of the more prosperous by the spectacle of the reckless habits which are encouraged by the Poor Law. These habits, I repeat, are greatly chargeable upon the law. Our improvident people only act as ninety-nine men out of every hundred would act in the same circumstances. Circumstances form the character and habits of most men, as a particular mould gives its shape to the clay which is cast in it. Circumstances created by Act of Parliament have formed the character and habits of the English hand-working population for improvidence; and must begin to operate on their minds in early youth, so soon as they are able to look about them in the world, and to recognize their position and prospects in it. Hence, as a preponderating majority of mankind would act in the circumstances, they act, in neglecting to make a provision for themselves, when a provision, slender though it be, has been made for them by others. They come to prefer present enjoyment, with the prospect of a parochial

pittance, to a decent independence, which might be secured in the future by present self-denial; though, doubtless, when they find themselves at last reduced to that pittance, they may quarrel with its petty amount; as the roué, who has chosen 'a short life and a merry one,' commonly regrets his choice when he finds that life drawing near to its end. But, if our wages-earners act with this deliberate improvidence and calculated selfishness, it is not to be expected that well-to-do persons will always be forward to succour them in the time of their distress. Nor can the justice of the refusal of this succour be reasonably called in question in such a case, since no man can reasonably squander his means on the superfluities of life, and then ask others to find him in its necessaries. What, however, shall we say of that system of law which naturally tends to close the hearts and hands of the wealthier towards the poorer members of the community?

Poor Law, according to the observation of an eminent expert in its administration, 'not only dries up the sources of humanity, but keeps the rich and the poor apart. Under its influence, Christian charity has become paralyzed by long disuse.' Abnormal and mischievous legislation, leading the richer to throw their social responsibilities, as it leads the poorer to throw their natural duties, and often themselves also, upon 'the parish'!

Poor Laws have been well termed, even by champions of the hand-working classes, 'a curse' to the country. Indeed, it would seem that Poor Laws in some shape and degree, though not necessarily *eo nomine*, are the certain 'curse' and appropriate punish-

ment of any country where either illiberality prevails in the better-to-do class, or idleness and improvidence in the worse-to-do class; and, according to that rule of action and reaction, which seems to prevail in the moral no less than in the material world, these laws seem invariably to favour the very vices which induced the establishment of such laws, to make the one class more illiberal, and the other class more idle and improvident. In proportion as the rich are wisely liberal, and the poor are industrious and provident, the less will be the disposition to resort to the expedient of Poor Law.

SECTION VI.

ECONOMIC ASPECT OF THE POOR LAW.

HAVING thus attempted to point out the mischief in material, social, and moral aspects, which the law of compulsory maintenance inflicts upon the wages-earning population and the ill effects of that law on the classes above, I proceed to notice the loss, both immediate and consequential, which constantly results from it to the general wealth of the nation. On this point the consideration is obvious that all the expenditure of money raised by poor-rates is in its very nature unproductive. The expenditure of one year in no wise diminishes the expenditure of the next year. This, as the interest on the National Debt, is a running sore of the body politic—a constant drain upon its material strength and resources. The tendency of Poor-Law expenditure is to increase itself by increasing the poverty which it proposes to relieve. It first creates the wants which it then supplies, and by supplying them creates further wants. Pauperism has been aptly compared by Mr. Pashley, in his important work on the subject, to Dante's wolf that could never satisfy its ravenous will, and was more ravenous after its meal than before. It has been

called by Mr. Walker, the author of 'The Original,' a man of no mean authority on the matter, 'a ravenous atrophy, which no food can satisfy.' It annually diverts a large sum of money from being laid out in such ways as would add to the capital, the wealth, the great 'wages fund' of the country. The amount annually expended on our Poor Law administration may be put in round numbers at 8,000,000*l.* Were these eight millions of pounds not thrown annually into the abyss of pauperism, they would chiefly be expended, directly or indirectly, in the remuneration of productive labour. The late Mr. Walker, in one of the profound and suggestive papers on pauperism contained in his 'Original,' calculates that of every 1,000*l.* now expended annually on poor-rates, no less than 900*l.* would be expended in labour. If we assume the correctness of his calculation, it follows that were these 8,000,000*l.* saved for one year from Poor-Law expenditure, then 7,200,000*l.* of the amount would be employed in the remuneration of labour. Say that the profits of 7,200,000*l.* expended in this manner would be only at the rate of 10 per cent. per annum upon it, then 720,000*l.* would be added in one year to the capital, the wages fund of the country. Next year, upon the above supposition, there would be 14,400,000*l.* + 720,000*l.* = 15,120,000*l.* to employ in the remuneration of labour. If this calculation be extended only to ten years, some idea may be formed of the loss to national resources accruing from Poor-Law expenditure. It is, at any rate, clear that this unproductive expenditure amounts in ten years, without computing loss of profits, to 80,000,000*l.* At the same time it is evident that a considerable part of this money, as

of all the other money paid in wages, would, were there no poor relief to be depended upon, be saved by the wages-takers, and that their means of comfort would be proportionately increased. Much of their savings would doubtless come to be employed by them in ways which, while benefiting themselves, would augment the general wealth of the nation. For it is an accepted, if not self-evident truth, that the wealth of a nation consists not in the accumulation of wealth in a few hands—a process which with the very powerful aid of poor laws has been going on in this country amid a deplorable mass of indigence—but varies directly with the distribution of wealth among a larger number of hands; for this among other reasons, that those persons who are possessed of competent means are usually inclined to increase their means by savings or by industry. For an illustration of this truth, we have only to look to the example of France, still the richest country on the Continent, notwithstanding her recent heavy calamities.

But the loss which our nation sustains through pauperism is not limited to the expenditure in maintaining it. This loss includes also the loss of the profits which would arise from the employment of the able-bodied, now kept by the poor-rates in idleness. It appears by the last returns that there are in round numbers 118,000 able-bodied paupers in the Kingdom. We will assume, and the assumption is not hazardous, that these persons could find employment, if they saw the necessity of it. If we assume, further, that the profit of their employment would be on the average no more than one shilling a head per diem, it follows that 118,000*s.* = 5,900*l.* a day, which amounts to 1,770,000*l.*

in the year of 300 working days, is lost in one year to the capital, the wages-fund, of the country, through the pauper-maintenance of these able-bodied persons. These considerations may serve towards illustrating the waste which the country suffers through the system in question, and the gain to the national wealth which would otherwise accrue.

It may be added that the injurious effects which habits of self-indulgence, favoured by Poor Laws, have upon the health and intelligence of the classes in question, must largely detract from their effectiveness as producers of national wealth, tending to place them at a still greater disadvantage with the more sober and more highly educated artizans of other countries.

In further illustration of the antagonism of Poor Laws to national wealth, the obvious remark shall be repeated, that these laws embody the principle of Communism or Socialism, which proposes the depredation of the more prosperous for the benefit of the unprosperous—a principle which is not only openly hostile to society itself, but which, if in any conceivable circumstances it could once be fully carried out, would have the effect, not of enriching the poor, but of plunging all into poverty. Nay, as we have seen, even the limited application of this principle by means of our Poor Laws, while it mulcts the better-to-do classes, only has the effect of indefinitely enlarging the area of poverty. The condemnation of the Poor Laws, on the ground that they involve the principle of Communism, uttered even by a 'working man' in the House of Commons, is worthy of citation, both as coming from such a quarter, and as aptly illustrating the fact that they involve that

principle. In a debate on Friendly Societies, on June 22, 1874, Mr. Macdonald, the 'working men's' member for Stafford, observed—'Well-regulated benefit societies might enable them to dispense with Poor Laws, which he regarded as the thin edge of Communism; for, if a twentieth part of the income of the prosperous portion of the public were taken from them to-day to support the poor, the time might come when all the income of the provident portion of the people might be applied to the support of the improvident.'[1] The cogency of this reasoning cannot be disputed; for the smallest application of the principle of Communism must create in the minds of those who profit by it a vague notion of right to any quantity of the property to which the principle is applied. If these persons are entitled to an indefinite fraction of others' property, by parity of reasoning they are entitled to the whole of it; nor can any question of more or less enter into the merits of their claim. In fact, one effect of compulsory relief is to confound, perplex, and pervert, in the minds of the actual or prospective sharers in it, the relations between themselves and the contributors of it.

Paupers are led to think that they have a right to this relief independently of positive enactment, and easily go on to argue that they have a right to more than is conceded to them. Where is their claim to stop? 'If we are entitled to a bare maintenance, gratis, at our neighours' expense, are we not equally entitled to a comfortable maintenance, nay, to an affluent maintenance?' Such, naturally, is the inarticulate reasoning of the pauperized mind. In fact, through the teaching

[1] *Times*, June 23, 1874.

of the Poor Laws, it insensibly imbibes the rudiments of Communism, and is prepared to receive the more advanced doctrines of its accomplished professors. On the other hand, the industrious and prudent wages-earner would be one of the last men to adopt the theories of Communism. One such wages-earner, or rather an ex-wages-earner—for he has secured a competent independence by faithful service and thrift—related that once in travelling he fell in with a loquacious advocate of Communism, who began confidently expounding its doctrines, and asserting that all men's possessions ought to be equalized. The ex-wages-earner combated this assertion, using the common-sense argument that some men are cleverer, or stronger, or more fortunate, or more industrious and prudent, and therefore become richer, than others. This argument, of course, had but little effect in silencing the Communistic philosopher, till at length his travelling companion proposed the practical test of an immediate division of their respective purses. It may be well believed that the Communist, being by his appearance possessed of the fuller purse of the two, unhesitatingly declined the proposal!

The time may, indeed, come, when the precedent of the Poor Laws will be employed in support of some other scheme which may be proposed, applying still more largely the Communistic principle; and when the inexorable argument will be pressed home:—'You have already admitted the principle in your Poor Law, and you cannot now turn round, and resist this proposal as containing that principle.' The Poor Law, in fact, may serve as a Magna Charta of spoliation, as it is the

Magna Charta of improvidence; and its antagonism to national wealth on this, as on other accounts, stands confessed.

The inconsistency of legal relief with public economy is seen also from the consideration that, such relief being really part of the remuneration which is paid for labour, it is given in equal amounts to the skilled and the unskilled worker—to the industrious and the idle; or rather, the skilled and the industrious usually obtain less of it than their opposites.[1] Neither is this part of the remuneration of labour equitably levied, for it is levied upon others besides the employers of the remunerated labour. For instance, let there be in a town two manufactories, employing between them three hundred hand-workers. Of these three hundred, say that one-half, a hundred and fifty, survive to be maintained on parish rates. They receive each from the rates (say) 4*s.* a week, that is 600*s.* = 30*l.* a week among them, or 1,560*l.* per annum. Of this sum the two master manufacturers pay, according to the rated value of their business-premises, say, 400*l.* per annum; hence, the other ratepayers bear the expense of the remaining 1,160*l.* a year. In other words, the other ratepayers pay this annual sum in supplement of the wages paid by the two employers aforesaid. The same in an agricultural town-parish. There are, say, ten farmers, employing 100 labourers among them. Of these labourers, say that sixty come upon the rates when they are disabled from earning wages. They receive from the parish 4*s.* each a week, that is, 12*l.* a week among them,

[1] This point is well put in the papers on Pauperism contained in Mr. Walker's 'Original.'

or 624*l.* a year. Of this annual amount the farmers pay, let us suppose, 250*l.*; hence, they leave 374*l.* to be paid annually to their disabled labourers, in practical complement of wages, by the other ratepayers.

From these two instances it appears that one effect of poor-rates is to make others than the employers of labour, in particular industries, pay, in effect, part of the wages of that labour. That other persons and classes of the community than the employers of labour should be compelled to bear, in effect, a part of the cost of that labour, is surely contrary to all sound doctrines of political economy, and must be detrimental to the wealth of a nation.

No doubt that by the abolition of rates for the supposed 'relief of the poor,' a proportionable gain would immediately accrue to owners and occupiers of land, houses, and business-premises, as was the case in the abolition of church-rates. This, however, is one of those rare cases in which the gain of one party would not in the event be a loss to the other. At the same time, there would be a solid public gain in the diversion of a large annual sum from unproductive expenditure to the remuneration of productive industry, and to the consequent increase of national wealth. Nor should it be forgotten that the abolition of a principal branch of local taxation on land and on business-premises would tend, by lowering the cost of production, to lower the price of agricultural produce and of all other commodities.

The enormous and increasing weight with which local taxation, now amounting to 33,000,000*l.* per annum, of which a considerable part is devoted to the

payment of interest upon local indebtedness, presses upon property in land, dwelling-houses, and business-premises, has of late attracted much and serious attention. It was stated two or three years ago, by no mean authority, that if this kind of taxation goes on increasing at the rate at which it has increased during the past thirteen years, it would, in about twenty years' time, reach the amount of present Imperial taxation. This subtraction from the wages-fund, and consequent detriment to the industry, of the country, makes it plainly expedient that such taxation should be eventually reduced, as in other items, so especially in the large and wholly unproductive item of poor-rates.[1]

[1] The large proportion which poor-rates bear to other items of local taxation in populous places, exclusive of our principal cities and towns, may be judged by the instance of Woolwich, in which place, as I am informed by an owner of houses there, the local rates amount in the pound to 7*s.*, of which so much as 6*s.* 8*d.* is levied in poor's-rate.

SECTION VII.

STEPS IN ABOLITION AND REMEDIAL MEASURES.

SUCH, then, are Poor Laws in their effects on different classes, and on the community as a whole. The amplest and most authentic testimony, the experience of generations and daily observation, all seem to show that such laws are adverse to the material interests and the good qualities of the most numerous class, to the beneficent action of the richer classes, and to the wealth of the nation. Compulsory Poor Laws, aggravating the evil they were designed to remedy, and bringing in worse evils besides, seem, in fact, to be a remarkable instance of the folly of contending with the laws of nature and Providence by which human society is governed, and which, even with the partial suffering which they permit, are still the wisest!

Our Poor Laws are products of the same meddling and short-sighted kind of policy with that of the laws which attempted to regulate the natural supply of food to a nation, and which were supposed to be beneficial to it by keeping up the price of food within it. It is long before men will recognize the limits within which alone the interference of laws can be of benefit to

society, and will learn to practise 'a wise and salutary neglect, a judicious letting alone.' Mistaken activity is even more mischievous than supine neglect. If the path of wisdom be deviated from, the greater the progress, the wider will be the error. 'Unhappily,' as it has been well observed, 'no knowledge is so rare as the knowledge when to do nothing. It requires an acquaintance with general principles, a confidence in their truth, and a patience of the gradual process by which obstacles are steadily but slowly surmounted, which are among the last acquisitions of political science and experience.'[1]

There are, however, those who seem to speak of compulsive relief as a matter of 'inalienable right.' Yet surely the same authority which gratuitously instituted such relief has the right to discontinue it. That authority, indeed, would be exercising its right with too great strictness in ceasing to grant relief to impotent individuals who, being without friends to help them, and not having provided for themselves, have been in the habit of receiving it; but, if it were not granted to others in the future, no injustice would be done to *them* at least. Poor Laws involve no social right, only a question of expediency. Had they involved any such right, then in all *pre-Poor Law* ages in all countries, and at the present time in all countries devoid of Poor Laws, a great and universal wrong has been done in the mere non-enactment of such laws!

Again, as to 'inalienable right,' the property in a parish, rated for poor relief, is, we suppose, the owners'! But, if an indefinite number of people, present and to come, born in the said parish or who have migrated to

[1] Report of Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners, 1834.

it, have an 'inalienable' right to share in the proceeds of that property, what becomes of the rights of its owners? Their property may be absorbed by poor-rates, as it actually happened in many cases under the unamended Poor Law, and the owners left with no more than 'barren rights.'

It has indeed been urged that owners of rated property purchased it subject to the payment of poor-rates; but these rates were estimated at their then amount, not at the amount which they might reach, if from any cause the settled population were indefinitely multiplied. The present writer is acquainted with a place, the population of which during the last twenty years has risen from about one to ten thousand, and is still increasing; it may be asked, how have the multitude of new comers, present and future, an 'inalienable right' to be maintained at need out of the rateable property of this locality? The owners must indeed submit to the taxation involved in such maintenance; but they are justified in complaining of the weight with which it falls on them. On the other hand, if the population of a place decrease, and so the poor-rates become lower than they were when the property in it was purchased —this is one of the inequalities and injustices incident to compulsive Poor Laws and poor-rates. It has by some been proposed to cure these inequalities by a 'national poor-rate;' but this would only introduce other and worse evils, among which may be mentioned a greatly increased laxity in the administration of relief, and greater opportunities of official jobbery, perhaps to the equal infringement of property, and certainly to the still greater demoralization and pauperization of the

population. But even an extension of the area of rating to the limits of the nation would be a mere matter of supposed expediency, and would imply no 'inalienable right' to relief from poor-rates. One cannot but think that those persons who import any question of 'right' into the consideration of pauper-relief, have not sufficiently attended to the distinction between the claims of social right, and claims founded upon positive enactment.

The chief defence, however, of the system of compulsory relief is rested on the ground of benevolence, and is summed up in the sentiment of supposed benevolence, 'the poor must not starve.' But your laws *make* people poor. 'Prevention is better than cure;' but here you multiply an evil, and then attempt to remedy it. But your remedy fails, for as a matter of fact it is found that there is as much starvation under our Poor Laws as in countries where there are no such laws. 'It will be found,' says Professor Fawcett,[1] 'that in France and Prussia there are no Poor Laws similar to ours, and these countries show that it is not necessary to have a Poor Law to prevent wide-spread starvation. In London, in proportion to the population, as many die from want and starvation as in Paris or Berlin. At every returning Christmas,' continues the Professor, 'the newspapers are filled with accounts of those who are suffering the horrors of starvation, the public is entreated to relieve cases of pressing necessity. Does not all this conclusively prove that our Poor Law system fails to reach thousands who most need assistance?' It may be added, that at all seasons of the year paragraphs

[1] Lectures on Political Economy, p. 568.

appear in the newspapers headed 'Deaths from destitution,' 'Deaths from starvation.' From such paragraphs it would appear that reluctance, or inability, or neglect, to apply for relief, or the obstinate refusal of 'the House,' or, as it sometimes happens, the consumption of out-relief, when obtained, in alcoholic drink instead of food, renders Poor Law inoperative to prevent starvation in particular cases.[1]

[1] The following recent paragraph, extracted from a London journal, is an illustration of the sentiments, under the influence of which, in spite of poor laws, starvation is sometimes voluntarily incurred:—

'On Saturday last a doctor was called in to a miserable lodging-room in the Commercial-road, Stepney, to visit an aged patient. He found her dead, lying on the tattered sheet and thin blanket which were the only articles of furniture in the apartment—starved to death at the age of ninety! There was not a scrap of food in the place. An inquest was held on Wednesday, and the following narrative came forth in evidence. The aged lady was named Ann Kelly, and occupied one room with her daughter. The body was in a dreadfully emaciated condition, and the daughter of the deceased, very poorly and lightly clad, said that she had resided with her mother at this place for about fifteen months. For some years past she had worked as a dressmaker, and at other needlework; the parent being unable to do anything. "She had sometimes earned as much as five shillings per week, but the general average was three shillings per week. Within the last month or two it could not have reached more than two shillings per week." The deceased had no income at all of her own, but a relative allowed them two shillings a week. "They never received anything in the shape of food from their friends." In June last, witness made application to the Board of Guardians for Mile-end Old Town for some relief for her mother. "She did not want them to give her anything for herself." They agreed to allow her mother two shillings a week and a loaf of bread. This was continued until the second week in August, when the Guardians disallowed the money, but *offered to take her mother into the house. She, however, positively declined to go*, and witness waited upon the Board and informed them of this strong feeling, and also told the relieving officer. The money was, nevertheless, stopped. Their total income afterwards was about four shillings per week, from which they had to pay for the rent of the room. "The deceased used to have a little beer once a day. They could not,

Johnson, speaking in the year 1779 with reference to the state of the poor in London, relates as follows: 'Saunders Welch, the Justice, who was once High Constable of Holborn, and had the best opportunities of knowing the state of the poor, told me that I underrated the number when I computed that twenty a week, that is, above a thousand a year, died of hunger, not absolutely of immediate hunger, but of the wasting and other diseases which are the consequences of hunger.' At the time in question Poor Laws, we know, were in full force: nor is there any reason to suppose that in proportion to the population there were fewer persons in receipt of parish-money than at the present time. Whatever may be the number of instances of starvation in London at the present day, it may be conjectured that the percentage of such instances is not smaller now than it was a hundred years ago. Thus evidently futile is the effect of Poor Laws in the prevention of starvation!

In truth, it would seem as though mortality, from whatever cause, were governed by a law of 'averages,' such as that according to which a certain number of people are every year run over by vehicles in the crowded thoroughfares of a large city like London, or as the

however, afford much meat. Sometimes they managed to have a little piece on a Saturday." In reply to the coroner, the daughter stated that they had to part with their furniture and clothes by degrees to enable them to live. On Saturday last, witness left her mother for a time, to try and see if she could borrow a little money of a friend. "She left home at ten minutes to five and returned at six o'clock. She then found the deceased lying dead on the floor." Naturally she was asked why no second application had been made for relief. The reply was, "*her mother had said she was determined to remain in their own place and not go into the house.*"'—*Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 12.

number of suicides in 1876 was the same as in the year before. Poor Laws may and do cause a great amount of poverty, distress, destitution, misery, and as a consequence of these, sometimes starvation: but the prevention of starvation, as of disease and of other ills to which flesh is heir, is beyond the power of any human contrivance. Poor Laws, so far from preventing starvation, only increase the chances of it. They will no more prevent starvation than Captain Boyton's life-preserving apparatus will prevent men from being drowned! No law can do away with one of the necessary consequences of human misfortune or depravity or folly, or exempt English people alone of all people in the world from their share in any one of the miseries of mortality. The few self-respecting poor, the deserving poor, who are unwilling to display their distress or to become pensioners on forced contributions—this is a description of poor who are likely to starve under our system, so called, of 'relieving the poor.' By these higher minds the loss of self-respect and of others' respect is more dreaded than physical privation. On such falls the real cruelty of the pseudo-philanthropy of compulsory relief, checking as it does the activity of private beneficence. Such people starve unknown in silence, while the shameless, the reckless, the worthless, boldly urge their claims to be maintained by a tax upon the labour and the savings of others. Meantime the compulsory relief system, as we have observed, narrows the hand of voluntary beneficence towards the deserving poor.—'The poor must not starve,' nor will they, if they use the proper means to prevent starvation, or, failing those means—a rare case—if their better-to-do relatives and friends do

their duty in supporting them, or their richer neighbours from motives of benevolence and Christian charity give them aid; as we may believe would far more extensively than at present be the case, were there no compulsory relief to which they might be left. The percentage of those who from causes out of their own control are in danger of starvation is small indeed. So we may conclude from the general testimony of those who have studied the matter, from the perceptions of common sense, nay, from the beneficence of Divine Providence in the constitution and ordering of human society. Hence their relief is quite within the power of their more fortunate relatives and friends, of common kindness and Christian charity. The benevolence which would have them relieved at the public expense, and particularly at the expense of the hard-pressed poorer ratepayers, is a cheap and false benevolence. It is the well-known story, A sees B in distress, and would like the rest of the alphabet to relieve him.

The fear of starvation is the force which since the primal curse sets the whole world in motion, and operates not only as the great motive to labour, but as a stern monitor against folly and vice. Man in passing through life has by some one been compared to a wilful donkey which must be kept by blows and curbs from loitering or deviating from its path! Poverty in its every form is among the disciplinary penalties by which, or by the fear of which, he is kept moving on the right road. But the Poor Law says that poverty in its worst form, that of starvation, shall not occur. Yet it cannot prevent its occurrence, for numbers actually starve under the Poor Law through the causes already stated. In fact,

the Poor Law promises to vice and folly an immunity from their natural consequences, saying to them, 'Ye shall not surely starve;' and well-known facts prove that in many cases the promise is a deception.

Our Poor Law system has, indeed, been defended on religious grounds, as that it furnishes a provision against destitution. We believe that it is not the will of a beneficent Creator that any of his rational creatures should suffer destitution; but compulsory Poor Laws concur with men's wilful improvidence in causing it. Hence these laws cannot be regarded as defensible on the religious ground. Yet Scriptural authority is, as the writer has been actually told, appealed to in their favour. On this point texts are quoted, inculcating beneficence, such as the words in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Give to him that asketh of thee.' It may, however, be observed, that such precepts are irrelevant to the question, as they relate to voluntary beneficence alone, not to compulsory contribution; relate, in short, to giving, whereas Poor Law relief is a case of *taking away*. The application of these texts to the economy of private bounty is foreign to the present subject, and will not therefore here be considered by us.

To these arguments from benevolence, with their alleged religious basis, may justly be opposed the saying of one who was no political economist, but an inspired teacher, whose philanthropy in its highest sense cannot be called into question—'If a man will not work, neither shall he eat'[1]—words which probably imply that no able-bodied idler shall live on the alms of the congregation. Such is the saying of St. Paul. That he would reprobate equally with the idle those who work indeed,

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 10.

but care to lay by for their families nothing of the produce of work, may be gathered from another of his sayings — 'If a man provide not [use no forethought] for his own, specially them of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;'[1] 'The parents ought to lay up for the children.'[2] And with regard to widows' adult children and even grandchildren, it is his precept that they 'first learn to be dutiful at their own home, and to requite their progenitors.'[3] He seems also to enjoin the support of destitute relatives, whether in a nearer or a more remote degree; for he bids 'believing men and women, *if they have widows*,' maintain them; and for a reason applicable to the present day, with an alteration in the letter, 'that the church [parish] be not burdened.' Others he bids 'work with their hands, that they may walk honestly, and may have need of nothing.' Nor would he have a man work merely for the supply of his own necessities, but also that he 'may have to give to him that needeth.' The more the spirit of this Apostolic teaching is carried out, the less assuredly will be the number of destitute persons, and these it will be quite in the power of their friends voluntarily to succour. But the teaching of our Poor Laws and their well-meaning defenders is, 'A man need not work, and yet he shall eat;' he need not lay by for his children; he need exercise no forethought for his own, not even for them of his own house; nor need sons or daughters requite their parents; nor need people keep their rela-

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

[2] 2 Cor. xii. 14.

[3] 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12. Εἰ δέ τις χήρα τέκνα ἢ ἔκγονα ἔχει, μανθανέτωσαν πρῶτον τὸν ἴδιον οἶκον εὐσεβεῖν καὶ ἀμοιβὰς ἀποδιδόναι τοῖς προγόνοις.

tives from burdening other people; nor work, either that they may walk honestly and have need of nothing, or that they may have to give to them that need!

Strange, however, that Scriptural authority should have been appealed to in favour of compelled relief, when in the Scriptures all notion of compulsion in relieving the necessitous is distinctly rejected, and Christians are bidden to do as they are 'disposed in their hearts, not grudgingly or of necessity,' for the reason that 'God loveth a cheerful giver.'

The greater part of the distress and destitution which abound in this wealthy, prosperous, and most charitable community, is the fruit of the Poor Laws—those very laws in favour of which the argument is used, 'The poor must not starve.' The idle, the improvident, the vicious, the sottish, whenever they look forward through the vista of years, see in their minds' eye the final refuge of 'the parish.' 'At the worst,' such characters think, 'we cannot starve, let the worst come to the worst;' and such characters are only too prone to brave the worst. No wonder that such characters suffer distress and destitution, and sometimes starve. They will sometimes spend their parish allowance in drink and tobacco, and starve, though 'relieved,' or they will refuse the offer of 'the House,' and so starve; on which occasions a loud outcry will probably be raised against the parish authorities! The prevention of destitution is surely better than the attempt to remedy it; but here we have a pretended remedy which immeasurably aggravates the evil.

It is again argued in favour of compulsory relief, on the ground of benevolence, that destitution is some-

times caused by mere inability to find employment; and from this fact the conclusion is 'jumped to' that 'the law' ought to find maintenance for the destitute. The notion, however, that men possessed of ordinary faculties cannot find employment is, according to the best testimony as well as common observation and experience, far more often fictitious than real. Employment, like other desirable things, cannot, indeed, always be found, unless it be sought for in good earnest and in the right way; but unfortunately, under the training of a law which assures maintenance to all who are unemployed, our hand-workers are often more apt to expect that employment will find them than they are in earnest to find employment. In short, this training makes the word 'impossibility' only too frequent in their vocabulary on this subject; though 'will is a measure of power' in this as in other things.[1] Further, when they are in employment, they are taught by the same law not to lay by from their wages against possible intervals of enforced non-employment, nor to care much to keep their employment. The lesson, too, of helplessness and of a want of enterprise, nay, of a proud laziness, which this law impresses on our hand-working population, forbids them, when their own particular industry comes to a standstill, from turning their hands to other employment. The Switzer, the German, the Frenchman much more commonly possesses this ver-

[1] The following statement illustrates the practicability of finding employment, where the word 'cannot' has been used:—'The dispauperized labourers have found employment to a greater extent than the most sanguine friends of the change could have anticipated in parishes where they were previously relieved as paupers.'—Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners' Report for 1834, pp. 353–4.

satile power of self-adaptation to new kinds of employment, and is devoid of the sloth or false pride which would restrain him from applying his energies thereto. Even amongst ourselves, in the upper-middle or middle classes, we may frequently see men, when they find their wonted field of exertion closed against them, betaking themselves readily to some other field, either here at home or in other parts of the globe. The varied faculties of man are not limited to one kind of exertion; and another occupation may be learnt by most men at a pinch, as well as another language. In fact, the case of a *bonâ fide* inability to find employment of some sort is a rare case indeed. Nor even in this case is it the business of legislation to provide men with maintenance at the expense of others; and, if such maintenance be provided, it will assuredly be made available by multitudes who could have employment, if they used due diligence in seeking it or due care to keep it when they have found it.

Persons may, perhaps, still be found who will assert that 'the law' might or ought to find work and pay for all hand-workers who ostensibly cannot find them by their own search. But why should this finding of work and pay be limited to the case of hand-workers, and not be extended to the case of head-working people also? Why, upon this principle, should not 'the law' undertake to find patients for unemployed professors of medicine, briefs for briefless lawyers, new canals and railroads for civil engineers wanting engagements, just as the late Emperor of the French found new streets and public buildings for the employment of hundreds of thousands of hand-workers, with notorious results of

indebtedness and high taxes, and consequently high prices? Nay, on this principle, why should not the State find war for officers of the army or navy, pining with their wives and children on half-pay? Or why should not the drudging author be remunerated from public funds, whenever he fails to sell at a profit works which he is fain to believe are calculated to enlighten the public? To return, however, to the hand-workers. How can 'the law' (convenient abstraction) find out whether this or that man who is out of employment has made all due exertions to find it or to keep it? Further, is 'the law' to find work where none exists? Is 'the law' to *make* work for all the unemployed? Nay, work cannot be made, except at a ruinous waste of capital. This 'finding of work' is the very principle of the 43rd of Elizabeth, which enjoined parishes to take order for 'setting the poor on work' by purchasing stocks of 'flax, hemp, wool, iron,' and other materials, to be worked up by them at the work-house (hence so called), with results of failure only too familiar to those acquainted with our Poor Law history. In fact, Elizabeth's work-houses soon ceased to be *work*-houses at all, and became what they are, mere lodging-houses for paupers. The practice of providing parish-work for able-bodied men, and employing them at regular wages, instead of offering them relief in the workhouse, 'creates,' says Mr. Longley, a Poor Law Inspector, 'an impression in the minds of the poor that they are entitled to demand at the hands of the guardians not merely relief, but labour: and it would place boards of guardians in Unions in which it is habitually adopted, in a position of great difficulty, if from a strike on the part of the

workmen, or from any other cause, a large body of labourers were suddenly thrown out of employment.'[1] This practice was reproduced, only in a more systematised form (for so principles, right or wrong, emerge on different occasions and in different ages and lands) in the notorious 'organisation de travail,' with its 'ateliers nationaux,' at Paris, among the Revolutionary experiments of 1848; and by its speedy and hopeless breakdown brought contempt and ridicule upon its patrons. In fact, every attempt to provide employment by law for all who are out of work must lead to mischief and soon come to an end. Such work must at the best be less profitable than the work done for private employers, because the inspectors of the work which is found by law, even if they mean honestly, are not actuated by the same keen motives of self-interest which impel private employers to take care that the work done is equivalent to the pay. Nor will men earning parish wages work with the same diligence as those who work for private employers, or 'on their own account.' Again, when the public is an employer of labour, and therefore a producer of commodities, it competes unfairly with the private producer, as it commands a larger capital, can undersell him, and is likely to 'flood' the market with its productions; as witness the outcries which we hear from handicraftsmen against the damaging effects wrought on their respective trades by the products of prison labour.[2]

[1] Mr. Longley's Report, 1871–2, page 100 of Local Government Report.

[2] Thus, for one among many instances, a deputation of 'working men,' in May 1877, urged on the Secretary of State for the Home Department the injustice, as they regarded it, of employing convict

Further, the law, if it undertake to employ all who happen to be unemployed, will render the employés of private persons unduly independent of their masters, by its standing offer of employment to all comers.

Lastly, if the parish, the organ of 'the law' in this case, give higher or even equal wages, as compared with the wages given by private employers, it will tempt away employés from the service of their masters; if it give less wages, it will lower the rate of wages.

Briefly to sum up what has just now been said, if 'the law' provide mere maintenance, without work, to all who ostensibly cannot find work, it will assuredly cause an undue number of persons to be out of work; if it provide them with work, and therefore with main-

labour, and thus competing with free labour in the market; and were informed that 'the whole question of prison labour was under the attention of the Government.' The effect of employment by the State in lowering the price of labour seems to be thoroughly recognized by the hand-working classes, as we may judge from abundant instances, among which may be cited the resolution adopted at a Trades' Union Congress at Leicester in September 1877, 'against the unfair competition of reformatories in the labour-market.' Similar complaints are made by employers against the employment of prisoners in manufacturing saleable commodities. For example, at the end of the Session of 1877, Mr. Howood, member for a manufacturing borough, put this significant question in the House of Commons—'If it were true that prisoners in Manchester or Salford Gaols were employed in the manufacture of buttons, and how far it was proposed to extend the employment of prisoners in this trade?' The Home Secretary, in answering the question, admitted that prisoners were so employed, and that complaints against the practice had been made 'by large and rich manufacturers.' We may regard these complaints in the particular cases as unreasonable from another point of view than that of the manner in which the market of labour and of manufactured articles is affected by this kind of work; yet these complaints illustrate the general principle that employment of labour by the State competes unfairly with private capital and free labour.

tenance also, it will do so at a greater or less loss, and in becoming an employer of labour, and a producer of marketable commodities, it will bear hard upon the rightful interests of private employers and producers, and of independent hand-workers. I have said nothing here of the injustice done to the *rate-paying* portion of the community in taxing them for the support, even with employment, of all who are not working for private employers.

Thus, then, the supposed benevolence of compulsory relief, while it impoverishes and demoralizes the classes who lean upon it, proves to be a manifold injustice in its operation, both on the rate-paying public and on private employers and producers, and on independent wages-earners also, and workers on their own account.

Those persons who, on the supposed ground of benevolence, advocate the system of maintenance by law, as though it were necessary for the subsistence of its objects, seem in effect to regard them as children, naturally incapable of looking forward and making provision for their own future in life. Are, then, those who take this view wholly unable to put themselves mentally in the position of these classes, so as to realize in them also the possession of the same natural faculty of forethought which they themselves possess? It is to be presumed that most of those amongst us who advocate compulsory relief on the ground of 'benevolence,' will recognize in its objects the existence of the faculty of forethought with regard to the concerns of a future state; yet implicitly they deny to them the possession of that faculty with regard to the concerns of the present brief stage of existence. For the British hand-

worker, and especially the agricultural labourer, is often looked upon as though he were incompetent to judge of the conduct proper to be pursued in his circumstances, and to manage his own concerns; as though he needed help on every side, and at every turn—he must be fed, physicked, clothed, taught, taken care of, instructed, entertained and amused, at the gratuitous expense of others, compelled or voluntary; patted on the back as a 'good boy,' and sometimes soothed as an ill-used good boy; till he begins to think himself helpless, and to look for all this 'coddling' and 'cockering up,' and yet to fancy himself aggrieved. Doubtless, by practically treating these classes as children, Poor Law and its advocates go some way towards making them 'children of a larger growth,' towards stunting in their minds man's faculty of 'looking before,' and towards inducing in them a corresponding carelessness about the adverse contingencies of the future; but the childish improvidence thus induced is the primary mischief of these laws.[1]

Benevolence in the Poor Law system! Surely there

[1] How far the hand-working classes have been looked upon as children in point of ability to take care of themselves may be seen from the following passage of the Report of 1834:—'To suppose that the poor are the proper managers of their own concerns; that a man's wages ought to depend on his services and not on his wants; that the earnings of an ordinary labourer are naturally equal to the support of an ordinary family; that the welfare of that family naturally depends on his conduct; that he is bound to exercise any sort of prudence or economy . . . *are views which many of those who have resided in pauperized rural districts seem to regard as too absurd for formal refutation.*'—Report, p. 63. It is no wonder that the law administered under the influence of such sentiments has induced in those classes much of the moral helplessness and security of the child who expects his daily food to come to him as naturally as the sun rises and sets.

is real cruelty on a large scale in a system which tends to make and to keep a large portion of the population poor, abject, and helpless—cruelty in holding out to them all its inducements to sloth, reckless self-indulgence, intemperance, and immorality. A short-sighted and 'weak-kneed' benevolence may advocate the continuance of such a system; but a far-seeing and robust benevolence would surely seek its abrogation.

True benevolence no less than politico-economic considerations would, as it is here contended, lead to the abrogation of compulsory relief. Its sudden abrogation, however, would on all sides be regarded as inexpedient and impracticable. Pauperism has become so deeply ingrained by traditional custom into the minds of a large portion of the population that it cannot be hastily got rid of. The law on which they have been so long used to build for their subsistence in the future cannot be withdrawn until they have by degrees learnt to rely on themselves. The wages-earning class, together with the rest of the community, must doubtless for some time go on suffering, in part at least, the effects of a lengthened course of false legislation. The aversion to change, to which Burke has ascribed the stability of our institutions, forbids any abrupt abolition of a long-established system of law, affecting the habits of the population, however it be condemned by political science as wrong in principle, or proved by experience to be mischievous in practice. Our Poor Law is indeed the Magna Charta of Improvidence; but even such a Magna Charta cannot be rescinded in a day, however imaginary the right to which it gives an apparent claim. But a gradual abolition of the law, accompanied

with remedial measures, would apparently be free from rational objection, until the British wages-earner, who has been treated as a child, and taught to think and act as a child, by this 'paternal,' nay, 'grandmotherly' species of legislation, has been trained to dispense with the pap-boat of Poor Laws and to feed himself; has recognized the fact that he is 'a man for a' that,' and must in reason take the responsibilities and duties of manhood, and be credited with its mental faculties; and has learnt that manliness consists not only in the assertion of rights, but in accepting one's lot in life with all its exigencies as well as its advantages, consists not only in demanding, but in deserving also, bearing and forbearing. So far ago as fifty-eight years, the necessity of abolishing Poor Laws was recognized by persons of high intelligence, including the late celebrated Rev. Sydney Smith, who, in a number of the 'Edinburgh Review' for 1819, thus expresses himself on the subject—'There are two points which we consider as now admitted by all men of sense: first, that the Poor Laws must be abolished; secondly, that they must be very gradually abolished.' And the same writer continues in language applicable, with some abatements, to the present state of the law. 'With respect to the gradual abolition, it must be observed that the present redundant population of the country has been entirely produced by the Poor Laws, and nothing could be so grossly unjust as to encourage people to such a vicious multiplication, and then when you happen to discover your folly, immediately to starve them into annihilation. You have been calling upon your population for two hundred years to beget more children; taught them to lay by

nothing for matrimony, nothing for children, nothing for age, but to depend upon justices of the peace for every human want. The folly is now detected; but the people who are the fruit of it remain. It was madness to call them into existence, but it would be the height of cold-blooded cruelty to get rid of them by any other than the most gradual and gentle means.' Fifteen years after Mr. Sydney Smith wrote these words, a departure from the old course of poor-legislation was indeed taken in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. This Act might have seemed to promise the ultimate abandonment of the Poor Law system; but of later years considerable retrogression towards the evils of the older law has been made through the perversion of the amended law. Even in present circumstances, therefore, few, perhaps, who have paid attention to the subject will be disposed to differ from the above-named eminent authority as to the necessity of the abolition of Poor Laws, while admitting the necessity of their gradual abolition.

There are, however, advocates for the retention of Poor Law who seem possessed with a notion that disabled hand-workers, though they have been duly in receipt of their stipulated wages, still have some unsettled claim on 'the country' or on 'society.' They are, therefore, according to this notion, entitled to public support, when they can no longer work. It seems that 'the country' or 'society' has had the best of their strength in their health and youth, and is therefore bound to support them in sickness or old age. In this picture the British hand-worker is in fact made to pose as a meritorious personage, nay, as a patriot, whose

energies have been exhausted in the service of his country, and who thus has established a claim on its gratitude. Let us suppose a hard-worked barrister or medical man, who depended on his professional income and who spent it all as he made it, claiming, when disabled from work, a maintenance at the public cost on the ground of his 'public services.' 'The country,' he might say, or 'society, has had the best of my intellectual strength in my health and youth, and is therefore bound to maintain me in my sickness or old age.' What would be thought of such a claim? Yet the mechanic or miner, when he was earning his wages, was no more laying the country under an obligation to him than was the barrister or medical man when he was earning his fees. Each was paid for his work, and there his claim ended. The notion that the disabled wages-earner is still a creditor on some party is alarming by its capability of indefinite extension, so that no one hiring service of any kind would know when his liabilities ended. Surely, however, in all common sense the payment of stipulated hire precludes all further claims to recompense, whether from private sources or public funds.

But there is an argument in favour of the retention of compulsory relief in a partial form, which requires notice, chiefly from the weight of the authority with which it has been propounded. In his 'Lectures on Pauperism, its Evils and their Remedies,' at pages 50–56, Professor Fawcett, reasoning from the mischievous operation of individual alms-giving and of charitable endowments, decides in favour of retaining compulsory relief, though he would abolish the out-door form of that relief. In the Professor's view, the facts which he adduces, to use his

own words, 'conclusively prove that it would be extremely mischievous still further to encourage the foundation of charitable endowments, or more powerfully to stimulate indiscriminate almsgiving. It is, however, absolutely certain that both these effects would follow, if the Poor Law were entirely abolished.' The question, then, may be reduced to these simple terms: 'Which involves the less evil, providing for the destitute by compulsory relief, or leaving them to the operation of voluntary charity?' Admitting the harm often done by voluntary charity, individual or endowed, in the encouragement of improvident conduct, the present writer must avow his belief, on grounds now to be stated, that incalculably greater harm is done in this direction by compulsory relief. The first ground of his belief is this—that let a system of compulsory relief be as carefully devised as possible, it will be increasingly perverted and abused in practice. In support of this ground he would refer to the acknowledged perversion and abuse which Elizabeth's Statute of 1602 underwent in no long time, and to the practical failure of the restricting provisions of the Act of 1834, which meant in-door maintenance to be the rule and out-door relief to be the rare exception. How thoroughly this intention of the Act has been frustrated is a matter of common and regretful observation; the number of paupers throughout the country receiving out-door relief is to the number of paupers maintained in the Union house as five to one, and in some Unions as eight or even more to one. The difficulty of adhering to salutary rules in the administration of compulsory relief is well illustrated by the account which a Poor Law Inspector, Mr. Wodehouse, gives of

his conference on the subject with a certain Board of Guardians: 'At a meeting of a Board which I attended,' says this gentleman, 'I took occasion to call their attention to the exceptionally high rate of pauperism in their Union, and to several points which appeared objectionable in their mode of administering relief. A large number of guardians were present, and, in the course of the discussion, one member stated it as his belief that the large majority of the guardians agreed with what I had said, and were prepared to assent to the principles which I had endeavoured to enforce; "but somehow," he added, "when we come to act as a Board, we don't carry them out." None of the other guardians expressed any dissent from this statement, and I have no reason to doubt it was correct.' The fact is that there are a number of uncontrollable agencies at work, which must ensure a greater or less perversion and relaxation of the best devised and most stringent law of compulsory relief. Fear, favour, indolence, mistaken benevolence at others' expense,[1] in the administrators of any such law, will inevitably co-operate with the importunity and sometimes the fraud also of applicants to its maladministration. If, as Professor Fawcett's view implies, there be a tendency to indiscriminateness in the dispensation of private alms, such a tendency is far stronger in the dispensation of public funds. If people are too careless in selecting the objects of their own voluntary benefactions, they are immeasurably more careless in selecting objects

[1] 'A Guardian is disposed to relieve anyone who has resided near himself, because he will only have to bear a fractional charge of it himself.'—Speech of W. H. Beach, Esq., M.P., at a Poor Law Conference, October, 1875.

on whom to bestow the enforced contributions of the public. Hence private charity, when it is charged with the whole business of relieving destitution, is more likely to be judicious than compulsory aid is likely to be administered in accordance with the most carefully devised law. In short, compulsory relief *must* be more indiscriminate than voluntary relief *need* be. In reference, however, to Professor Fawcett's apparent preference, in the above quoted passage from his 'Lectures on Pauperism,' of compulsory over voluntary relief, we may appeal from the Professor in his Lecture to the Professor in his 'Manual of Political Economy.' At page 359 of that work he appears to argue for the abolition of all compulsory relief. 'Believing,' says he, 'as we do, that the Poor Laws have not only exerted a most baneful influence in the past, but are also at the present time offering a most serious encouragement to improvidence, the question may be asked, Would it be wise and just to abolish the legal claim to be maintained which everyone now has? To this question it may at once be replied that it would be neither wise nor just to introduce such a fundamental change precipitately. . . . The abolition of parochial relief ought to be carried out gradually, and should form a part of a comprehensive scheme of social and economic reform.' It can hardly be doubted that the Professor here argues in favour of the abolition of compulsory relief, and therefore, inferentially, in favour of its necessary alternative, voluntary relief, imperfect though it be; and while no method of dealing with collective poverty can be perfect, that which has the less imperfection is the better.

But the chief ground on which the present writer

rests his belief in the more harmful properties of compulsory relief is that it exerts a more demoralizing influence than voluntary relief. Private beneficence must be precarious, compulsory relief is assured. Hence the thriftless can only calculate that they *may* be supported by the one, while they believe that they *must* be supported by the other. And this difference between *may* and *must* in the anticipations of the pauperized mind is immeasurable in its results on conduct. The less the probability of relief, the less will be the amount of unthrift; while the certainty of relief is to unthrift a positive and prevailing encouragement. Hence, as a general rule, where relief is exclusively voluntary, the poverty will chiefly be of an involuntary kind; where compulsory relief exists, the poverty will be chiefly of the kind which is wilfully incurred.

This difference between the moral effect of Poor Law relief and of voluntary relief is well stated by Mr. Longley, a Poor Law Inspector, in his Report for the year 1873–4: 'It is indeed the very fact that Poor Law relief may be claimed by the destitute as of right which constitutes the main difference between its administration and that of relief which is charitable and therefore voluntary. . . . . Relief given as of right must tend to encourage improvidence to a greater degree than that which, being a matter not of right but of voluntary precarious and intermittent charity, cannot be so surely anticipated as a future resource.'[1]

Of the almost mechanical certainty with which legal provision against individual adversity of any kind acts in encouraging improvident and reckless conduct,

[1] Report of Local Government Board for 1873–4, p. 145

a noteworthy example has been supplied to the present writer by a French correspondent. His letter shall be quoted in the original language: 'Je puis vous apporter un argument qui prouve jusqu'à quel point peut aller l'insouciance de l'homme quand il sent derrière lui une loi ou même une coutume sur lesquelles lui ou les siens peuvent compter pour l'avenir. Il est arrivé fréquemment que des ouvriers employés dans des fabriques ont été tués ou mutilés dans le service de leurs patrons. L'ouvrier ou sa famille ont alors droit à une indemnité que jusqu'ici les tribunaux ont largement accordée. Mais voyez la conséquence de cette liberalité des tribunaux. On en est à remarquer dans les différents procès qui se déroulent devant les cours que les ouvriers prennent beaucoup moins de précautions et s'exposent sans nécessité, comme s'ils comptaient en cas d'accident sur l'indemnité que le tribunal ne manque pas d'accorder en de telles circonstances. Je tiens ces remarques de—, commis-greffier à la cour d'appel de—, et par conséquent on ne peut être mieux placé pour être bien renseigné à cet égard. On comprendra facilement que si l'homme raisonne ainsi quand il y va de ses membres ou de sa vie, il dira beaucoup plus facilement encore, Mangeons, buvons; quand nous n'aurons plus rien, les lois des pauvres sont là.'

The same gentleman adds his testimony, as an impartial looker-on, to the effect of our Poor Laws in creating improvidence: 'Parmi les causes très-nombreuses de paupérisme en Angleterre, ne pourrait-on compter le défaut de prévoyance engendré d'un côté par *cette arrière-pensée, plutôt instinctive que raisonnée,* que, si l'ouvrier vient à manquer, il trouvera des secours qui lui sont dus par la paroisse ou par l'Etat.'

I would also commend to the attention of those who think that compulsory Poor Laws in any shape are preferable to private benevolence, the following extract from the same letter, accounting for the admitted superiority of the French wages-earning classes over the English in point of prudential parsimony: 'Il y a de l'aveu de tout le monde moins de ces pauvres dont vous parlez en France qu'en Angleterre. Le travailleur épargne plus chez nous que chez vous. Quelle en est la raison? D'abord nous n'avons pas les lois des pauvres, c'est quelque chose; l'assistance publique est organisée sur une vaste échelle, mais en aucun cas le nécessiteux ne peut s'y considérer comme un droit, chacun par conséquent doit songer à son propre avenir.'

These facts seem to tell powerfully against any system of legal relief.

Again, in comparing the effects of compulsory with the effects of voluntary relief, it should be considered that the latter is the less demoralizing, in that it is generally received with gratitude, or, at least, with some sense of an obligation; whereas the former is received as a matter of course, and often under the false impression that it is due by an absolute right.

It would seem, therefore, that while there can be no perfect system of dealing with collective destitution, the imperfections inherent in the nature of its compulsory relief far outweigh the imperfections, which may attach to private beneficence, and which the writer suggests to be the more easily reducible of the two. Whatever difficulties there may be in dealing with destitution in a community—and difficulties greater or less in the matter may always be apprehended—what-

ever the imperfections in any method for its alleviation, and there will be imperfections in every such method; the worst, the most slovenly and most mischievous method of dealing with it that the wit of man has devised, seems to be that of granting to it a perpetual lien on the industry and savings of the rest of the community, or, in other words, that of giving it a legal right to relief; and so indefinitely extending it by the removal of the strongest motives to the avoidance of it, and at the same time bringing into play all those inevitable agencies of demoralisation, and creating those drawbacks to the national wealth, which experience has shown to be the concomitants of the compulsory method of relieving the destitute.

Reverting, therefore, to the point before us—the abolition of this method—the writer would offer some suggestions for what the late Mr. Sydney Smith called 'the gradual and gentle abolition of it'—the abolition of it by degrees, and with the accompaniment of remedial and mitigatory measures.

The first step in the process would be the annulment of out-door relief to able-bodied paupers. The annulment of out-relief to this class might be beneficially accompanied by such a modification of the Law of Settlement as would make one year's unrelieved residence within the limits of a particular Union a title to 'settlement' in that Union. Some law of settlement —impolitic as any law of Settlement in itself may be—seems yet a necessary complement of a law of compulsory aid; and, indeed, one wrong step in legislation, as in some other things, seems to induce another wrong step, as necessary to palliate the consequences of the

original error, leading, however, to still further perplexity, trouble, and bewilderment. An erroneous course having been instituted, every expedient to meet the evils which will be incurred, save the one expedient of retracing that course with all practicable speed, will but shift them, and will probably lead to a still worse state of things. Thus our Poor Laws induced the expedient of the Laws of Settlement. But we may observe how in several respects these laws came to work mischief. They made it the interest of the owners of whole parishes to pull down cottages on their property, so as to drive the labourers who worked upon it into other parishes, wherein they would acquire settlement, with its corresponding right to 'relief.' By thus driving into other parishes the labourers on their property, the owners would relieve it from the charge of poor rates, and thus be enabled to obtain higher rents. These same Laws of Settlement also furnished a motive to many a manufacturing capitalist for building his 'mill' on the edge of the parish in which his 'hands' lived, so that he himself, carrying on his business in a different parish, would escape from his share in the poor-relief upon which they and their families would come. Here assuredly was a great grievance, by which those who profited by labour threw upon others the legal relief of the labourers. The grievance was brought before Parliament; and in 1863 an Act, called the Union Chargeability Act, was passed, by which the area of rating was extended from the parish to the Union-district, so as to compel the evasive landowners and 'millowners' aforesaid to contribute towards the 'relief' of those who worked on their land

or in their factories. This seemed a promising adjustment. But what was the consequence? An injustice was done to the ratepayers of parishes, in which pauperism was scanty, in obliging them to contribute to the relief of the paupers of other parishes within the Union. For example, in a small parish in Somersetshire, there happen to be but two paupers; but the rate-payers of this parish have to contribute to the maintenance of all the paupers within the Union. In fact, the extension of the area of rating from the Parish to the Union was in favour of the ratepayers of large parishes as against the ratepayers of smaller parishes within the same Union-district. Further, the interest of the Poor-Law authorities of a particular parish, in keeping down its pauperism, was diminished, in that the ratepayers of that parish would now have to bear only a fractional part of the charge of maintaining its own paupers. 'A few more paupers here,' they would say, 'will make hardly any difference to our rates;' whereas, under the previous system of parish-rating, they would have to bear the whole cost of supporting the paupers of their own parish. The result has been a laxer administration of out-relief since the passing of the Union Chargeability Act, and a consequent rise of poor-rates and increase of pauperism. In fact, the system of compulsory relief being, as is here contended, erroneous in itself, the consequence is that any remedy for one of its mischiefs only replaces it by another mischief, which again requires a remedy, and so on indefinitely, with a zigzag alternation between mischief and remedy, and mischief again. With regard, however, to the Settlement Laws, which are the point imme-

diately before us—laws of which the expediency is now being widely canvassed—if they were abrogated during the continuance of our Poor Laws, and if relief were given to applicants irrespectively of domiciliation, we should, it is feared, have paupers travelling at will over the kingdom, and sojourning during pleasure in particular Unions, according to their caprice or convenience, and so bringing fresh burdens on the rate-payers of those Unions.[1] There would be also the danger that every great centre of industry would attract to itself an excessive number of wages-earners, who, as soon as a stoppage of work took place in their particular industry, or as they themselves were disabled from working by sickness, accident, or age, would throw themselves on the poor-rates of the locality; or that the doles of endowed charities would attract a

[1] The *raison d'être* of Settlement Laws is well explained in the following extract:—'The poor of the parish are in one sense all who happen to be in the parish at the time of their being in distress; for the parish in which they happen to be is bound to afford such paupers immediate or, as it is called, casual relief. But if the same parish were bound also to afford continued relief to, or permanently to maintain, all the destitute who should come within it, the burden of supporting the poor might press very unequally upon different parishes. Paupers would then, influenced by their own fancy, or instigated to exonerate some other parish, have the power of fastening themselves for ever on any particular parish, or of roaming at pleasure from one parish to another in unrestricted vagrancy. The 13 & 14 Car. II., which is the foundation of our Settlement Laws, was passed to obviate these evils.' It may be added that one reason for the Settlement Law of Charles II. was the vagrant habits prevalent in the population at a time when a large part of the country was covered with forests and morasses, abounding in game, and offering temptations to a lawless and adventurous life, and when there were wide tracts of waste land on which adventurers would seek to settle themselves permanently.

still greater number of aspirants than they now attract, augmenting in the particular localities a mass of pauperism of the worst form.

Even with our present Settlement Laws a considerable amount of migration, with a view either to profitable employment or charitable donations, takes place, and, through the operation of the Poor Laws, presses unfairly on the original inhabitants of the particular localities to which the migration is made. One form which this industrial migration—oppressive to local payers of poor-rates — assumes, is when an obscure place suddenly rises, on account of its salubrity or other natural attractions, into public favour, and when a number of builders, speculators in building, house-jobbers, and contractors, availing themselves of the opportunity with the unerring instincts of trade, bring to the spot hundreds of masons, bricklayers, carpenters, and other artificers, and continue their house-building operations for several years. At length this particular form of industry works itself out; but a large number of the aforesaid handworkers, with their families, remain and saddle themselves on the poor-rates of the locality. In the absence of any law of settlement, it is probable that all the above-mentioned gravitations of population to attractive centres of employment or charity, and the consequent spoliation of the local ratepayers, would take place to a still greater extent than is the case at present. But any law of Settlement must carry with it this great evil, that it hinders in a measure, greater or less, according to the exigency of the terms of settlement, the free circulation of labour, discouraging in such measure.

the honest worker from carrying his valuable commodity of labour to the best market, making labour scarce and dear in one place, over-abundant and cheap in another, causing a congestion of population in one part of the body of the nation, and a tenuity of population in another part. Adam Smith, in his 'Wealth of Nations,' asserted, says Professor Fawcett, that there was probably no artisan of forty years of age who had not suffered from the Law of Settlement.[1] So long, however, as we have a system of compulsory 'relief,' we must, it is argued, have some law of Settlement; and the usual compromise, so called, between having something and not having it at all—viz., having a little of it—would, as an accompaniment to the cessation of able-bodied out-relief, seem the best expedient. If settlement were made comparatively easy, it might still act as some discouragement to the vagrancy of idle paupers, while it would less deter others from the enterprising change of abode in quest of remunerative employment.

It is, indeed, argued, that the total abolition of Settlement Laws would be expedient, if effected conjointly with the abolition of *all* out-door relief. In support of this argument the case of Ireland is adduced, where scarcely any out-door relief is granted, and no Settlement Laws exist at all. In fact, hundreds of Irish paupers, attracted by the allurements of English out-relief and Settlement Laws, flock over to our seaport towns, such as Liverpool, and quarter themselves upon the rate-payers; and, it may be added, if sent back to Ireland by our parish authorities before gaining a set-

[1] 'Manual of Political Economy—the Poor Law and its influence on Pauperism.'

tlement, frequently return to England at the first opportunity offered. In Ireland, however, it is stated, no inconvenience arises to ratepayers of particular localities from influxes of population into them, as the offer of the workhouse is found to be a sufficient check to the augmentation of pauperism in such localities. The conclusion from this fact would be in favour of the abolition of our Settlement Laws, if conjoined with the abolition of *all* out-door relief, in checking the practice of which lies the chief use of the Settlement Laws. If not the abolition, at least the modification, of these laws seems expedient, as an accompaniment of the cessation of out-relief.

The efficacy of the refusal of out-relief, coupled with the offer of the workhouse, in dispauperizing the able-bodied, may be seen from the following striking statement of Mr. Cowell, an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, which occurs in the Report of 1834:[1]—'New life, new energy, is infused into the constitution of the pauper; he is aroused like one from sleep; his relation with all his neighbours, high and low, is changed; he surveys his former employers with new eyes. He begs a job; he will not take a denial; he discovers that every man wants something to be done. He desires to make up this man's hedges, to clear out another man's ditches, to grub stumps out of hedge-rows for a third; nothing escapes his eye, and he is ready to turn his hand to anything. In fact, the speed with which the method produces its ameliorating effects is one of the most remarkable characteristics. Mr. Baker told me that one man, after having been in Uley workhouse but

[1] Pages 247–8.

a few hours, was so disgusted that he begged permission to leave it instantly. Upon being told that the rules did not permit anyone to quit the workhouse who did not make the application before 12 o'clock in the day, he displayed the greatest anxiety at the prospect of being kept in till that hour the next day, and pestered the governor with repeated requests to be permitted to depart in the interval. Yet this was a man pretending that he was starving for *want of employment*; and, though he knew that he was secure of enjoying within the workhouse excellent food, clothing, and lodgings, yet the prospect of *restraint* spurred him instantly to quit it, and seek to maintain himself. But still more remarkable is the fact that the instant the system [of in-door maintenance] was put in action at Uley, the workhouse changed the whole of its inmates three times in one week.'

In fact, the workhouse system of relief carries into effect the great principle which the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners of 1832 enunciate with a view to dispauperization, 'that the condition of the able-bodied pauper should be less eligible than the condition of the independent labourer.' It might, possibly, indeed, be supposed that the condition of the out-door able-bodied pauper with his parish-pittance *was* less eligible than the condition of the independent worker in receipt of fair wages. But abundant experience proves that the condition of the demoralized able-bodied pauper in receipt of out-door relief is not less eligible in *his* eyes than the condition of the independent labourer. To a pauper of this kind, the pleasures of idleness, of free locomotion, of companionship, compensate for his infe-

riority, in a pecuniary respect, to the industrious wages-earner. 'The House' alone is the form of relief which such a pauper thinks less eligible than the condition of the wages-earning worker.

Principles produce the same effect in whatever country they are applied; and the principle of in-door maintenance had the same effect as among ourselves when it was applied not long since in Egypt, as the present writer is informed by a near relation, then residing in that country. The Khedive, in order to put a check to the mendicity prevailing at Cairo, opened, at the suggestion of a European adviser, an establishment for in-door maintenance. For a week it was full, but at the end of that week not an inmate remained in it!

Again, as another step towards the total abolition of out-relief, and ultimately of all forced relief, it would appear necessary to limit to an admission into the workhouse the public maintenance of illegitimate children and their mothers, when the mothers themselves cannot find means, nor the fathers be compelled to make provision, for the maintenance of such children.

Experience, in Scotland as well as in England, has clearly shown that the administration of out-relief in this case not only removes that restraint upon unchastity which is furnished by the prospect of the burden of maintaining the offspring, but that it also gives a direct encouragement to this vice. A resident landowner in Scotland, known to the present writer, has given him the following account of the tendency of out-relief to encourage unchastity:—'I was one day in our soup-kitchen, temporarily established, during a severe

winter, for the benefit of the poor in a town in Scotland. Observing one young woman receive an unduly large portion, I asked her for an explanation. This was given, in broad Scotch, with the utmost *sangfroid*, and without shame or remorse. She said she had four children, and was unmarried; that in her *trade* (!) one or two children did not answer; it was the many that paid, as for each child she got 2*s*. 6*d*. a week. She was therefore receiving 2*l*. a month, or 24*l*. a year; while honest hard-working mothers of families could scarcely earn half this sum. In Scotland such cases are found by thousands and tens of thousands.'[1] Surely it were on all accounts better that the children of such mothers, together with the mothers themselves, received no other parish support than as inmates of the workhouse.

In England, according to the testimony of a Poor Law Inspector, 'widows with bastard children obtain out-relief.'[2] Assuredly it would be expedient, as a check both on immorality and pauperism, that in all such cases out-relief should be refused.

In the present administration of out-door relief there is an occasional practice that cannot be too soon or too resolutely discontinued. I refer to the granting of that relief under the threat of the applicant that he will let himself starve if it be refused to him, rather than enter the workhouse. This threat of virtual suicide is the more likely to be held out by the unscrupulous pauper in proportion as he sees that the authorities are likely to be wrought upon by it. It needs hardly to be ob-

[1] The Report of the Registrar-General for 1871 gives nearly one in ten as the proportion of illegitimate births in Scotland.

[2] Mr. Longley's Report for 1871–2, p. 101.

served that, if the practice of yielding out-relief to this threat were to become general, every artful pauper in the kingdom would have ready to his hand an effectual instrument for the extortion of the coveted advantage. However, though the threat may in a few instances have been carried out through the obstinate pride and desperation of the applicant, it is evidently always staked on the chance of intimidating the authorities. Let it therefore be once made an understood thing that the offer of the House is the offer of 'Hobson's choice,' and these threats of starvation will soon cease. No mendicant threatens that if his request be refused, he will destroy himself, as he knows that such a threat would be useless. It may be added that the doctrine of 'consequential damages' would be carried too far against the Poor Law authorities, if they were held responsible for the wilful starvation of anyone to whom they have made the offer of the House, that is, of gratuitous lodging, food, and clothing! It has been suggested that the removal to the House might with advantage be made compulsory in cases of manifest and helpless destitution, as is the practice in another country; but it may be believed that the force of hunger will be sufficient to induce an entrance into the House, if there be a certainty that hunger will be satisfied in no other place.

In the frequent case of wife-desertion, the total discontinuance of out-relief would not only prevent the noted frauds and collusions between absconding husbands and their wives, but would also prove a great check to wife-desertion itself. If the workhouse were the invariable destination of deserted wives coming on

the parish, husbands would be less ready to desert them, and the wives would have an additional motive for endeavouring to retain the affections and presence of their husbands.

Meanwhile, as we may gather from observation and the Reports of Poor Law Inspectors, it would seem that with the view of ensuring greater discrimination and vigilance in the administration of relief, the present number of relieving officers should in many districts be increased. They would then be able to exercise a more careful investigation into the circumstances of individual paupers and their near relations, so as to be able to judge of the fitness of each applicant's case, and prevent as far as possible the numerous kinds of fraud which it appears are at present practised in the reception of relief. 'The neglect of the duty of visiting the homes of paupers,' says Mr. Longley, in his Report for 1871-2,[1] 'is partly due to the fact that the staff of relieving officers is, in many Unions, inadequate in point of numbers to exercise a proper supervision over the persons receiving relief within their districts . . . It is, in my opinion, most important that the staff of relieving officers should be rendered adequate in point of numbers to the discharge of the duties imposed on them.' It would, therefore, seem to be a false economy which should save the expense of remunerating a sufficient number of relieving officers at the still greater expense of having more paupers on the pay-book, whose example will bring others also upon it.

It may on this point be worthy of consideration whether the salaries of these important functionaries

[1] Page 102.

might not with advantage be raised, so as to induce men of higher education to undertake the office. In this event the existing number of these officers might suffice; while the services of well-educated men in the reduction of parochial expenditure might be expected to make up for the increase of salary. In a Union in Ireland, to the excellent management of which the present writer can bear witness from enquiries made on the spot, the unpaid services of the chairman, a man of education, who specially devotes himself to the duties of his office, are regarded by his colleagues as 'worth a thousand a year' to the ratepayers. It may be mentioned that the poor's-rate in this Union was no higher than 6*d.* in the pound. A similar value might attach to the services of relieving officers of a more highly qualified grade than they now usually come from. Upon the intelligence and activity of these officers the hope of an improved administration of the Poor Law must greatly depend; and their comparative inefficiency, almost inevitable, is the weakest point in the machinery by which that law is at present worked.

This measure, together with an increased care and rstictness on the part of Boards of Guardians in the manner of applying public money, of which they are trustees, to the purpose of out-door relief, would do much towards retrenching this kind of relief, the kind which has by far the greater share in the impoverishment and demoralization of the population. The powers of Boards of Guardians would at the same time be advantageously enlarged so as that an exclusive discretion should be vested in them in regard to the granting of relief, in each case as it comes before them. These

functionaries, with the help of the relieving officers, are likely to be better informed than any others can be as to the circumstances and characters of individual applicants. Hence, it would seem that their decisions in the matter of relief ought not to be liable to reversal or modification. Justices of the peace can seldom have any personal knowledge of the fitness of the several applicants; the central authority can have none. Only through the unfettered exercise of discretion by Boards of Guardians can out-door relief be effectually retrenched. The effectual retrenchment of this form of relief would go far towards checking the spirit of pauperism itself, and would thus even tend to diminish the influx of paupers to the Union house, as statistics have proved in the instances where such retrenchment has been carried out.

The first and greatest step, then, towards the abolition of compulsory relief is the abolition of its worst form, that of out-door relief.

The power of this form of relief to work mischief may be judged of by the rapidity with which it could pauperize a thrifty population like that of Scotland.

'Scotland,' says Professor Fawcett, 'affords the most striking proof that a Poor Law must inevitably be mischievous if it permit out-door relief. There is every reason to anticipate, from the general social character of the Scotch, that less pauperism would be found among them than in any other country; they are proverbially thrifty, intelligent, and prudent; and contrasts have often been drawn between the saving habits of the Scotch and the spending propensities of the Irish. All *à priori* reasoning would therefore seem

to show that there must necessarily be much less pauperism in Scotland than in Ireland. What, however, are the facts? At the present time there are, in proportion to the population, more than three times as many paupers in Scotland as in Ireland; and in the Scotch Highlands there is twelve times as much pauperism as in Ulster and Connaught. These facts, which at first appeared incredible, admit a very obvious explanation. In 1845 a new Poor Law was passed for Scotland; from some strange perversity on the part of our legislators, this Act, instead of being modelled upon the Irish Poor Law, gave even greater facilities for the granting of out-door relief than existed in England. It soon became evident that the Scotch, though naturally prudent and thrifty, became sensibly affected by the demoralizing influence of the new system which had been introduced. An opinion rapidly grew up in many quarters that out-relief was conferred as a gift upon the people to enable them to do without work. As an evidence of what was taking place, a suggestive complaint came from the fishermen of Wick that they "could not get their nets made and repaired, for those who had formerly been employed in this work now said it was far more comfortable for them to obtain a maintenance from the parish." . . . Many who had sums of money in the banks transferred their money to other names, in order that they might not forfeit their chance of getting something out of the rates.'[1]

Some philanthropical theorists may still cherish the hope of a judicious administration of out-door relief. In this, however, as in so many cases, experience contra-

[1] Lectures on Pauperism, pp. 30–1.

dicts the suggestions of hope. Witness the failure of the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, designed to make in-door maintenance the rule, and out-door relief the exception, but in general practice wholly perverted. As in the decisions of justices of the peace before the passing of that Act, so in the resolutions of Boards of Guardians since its passing, limitary terms, such as 'emergencies,' 'sudden and urgent necessity,' 'exceptional cases,' 'extreme cases,' have been found so elastic as to include all cases of application for out-door relief. In truth, while it is not easy in theory to draw a line below which this form of relief shall not be granted, it is found impossible in practice to keep above that line. The permission of out-door relief, in fact, contains within itself a principle of indefinite extension. The discretionary dispensation of public funds on a large scale is seldom continued for any length of time in conformity with the intention of legislators. Where the pecuniary interests of multitudes are concerned in administration, only the plain and positive directions of law have a chance of being faithfully carried into execution; indulgent exceptions will be interpreted with so great latitude as, in a short time, to include ordinary cases; and a permitted alternative of concession will wholly prevail over the prescribed alternative of refusal. 'The bane of all pauper legislation,' say the Commissioners of 1832, 'has been the legislating for *extreme cases*. Every exception, every violation of the general rule to meet a real case of unusual hardship, lets in a whole class of fraudulent cases, by which the rule must in time be destroyed.' Out-door relief, in fact, must either be abolished or

abused. The same Commissioners, whose recommendations point towards the abolition of out-door relief, have been proved by subsequent experience to have been almost prophetic, both in their warning that 'to permit out-relief as an exception would be to permit it as a rule,' and in their remark that 'the construction which had been put, giving a discretionary power to order relief "in cases of emergency," shows that every case would be considered a case of emergency.'[1] Nor can there be any dispute as to the truth of their proposition that 'a person who applies to be maintained out of the produce of the industry or frugality of others, must accept that relief on the terms which the public good requires:' and in the light of facts it seems clear that such terms would involve the exclusive offer of a maintenance in the Union-house.

Although indeed individual cases of hardship might occur at first in the general stoppage of out-relief, as even now they occur in the occasional refusal of it, those cases would be far fewer than perhaps at first thought might have been expected. The hardship of the 'breaking up of homes' is sometimes urged in behalf of out-door relief; but, by the concurrent testimony of all authorities and experts, at least nine out of ten applicants, when the exclusive offer of the House is made to them, decline it, and find that they can support themselves in their own homes by their own exertions or with the help of friends. Nay, in a great number of instances a larger proportion than that of nine-tenths of the pauper-applicants are content to take the negative alternative of 'Hobson's choice,' the House or

[1] Report of 1834, p. 287.

nothing.[1] Thus, a Poor Law Inspector, Mr. Doyle, in his Report for 1872–3, actually states that in the Wellington Union, out of 647 applicants to whom in the course of that year the offer of the House was made, no more than twenty-seven accepted it, some of whom remained in it a few days only! Hence it appears that nearly all these applicants, when the House was offered them, found at their homes means of support by their own exertions or the help of friends. In a considerable number of cases, Inspectors tell us, the homes of applicants for relief are in a great measure 'broken up' already, abandoned by the husbands, or stripped of household furniture and effects, which have been seized by creditors or sold by intemperate or otherwise thriftless husbands, whose wives and children at least would be more comfortable if their homes were wholly broken up, and they themselves transferred to the more orderly and better-found home of the Union-house. Still there would be a small 'residuum' of cases in which the offer of the House would be accepted, and removal to it felt to be inconvenient. Yet the immense amount of good, both material and moral, which by the example of their removal would accrue to the many from such a discouragement of pauperism, would greatly outweigh the inconvenience of the very few. It would be made clear to men that

[1] For proofs of the paucity of cases in which the exclusive offer of the House is accepted, see *passim* from page 103 to page 214 Mr. Wodehouse, a Poor Law Inspector's, luminous Report for 1871–2. Enquiries were made by this gentleman in seventy Unions, and in a great number the answer is that 'one in ten,' or 'not one in ten,' of those to whom the offer is made accept it; in many Unions 'not one in twenty' accept it; in others it is 'refused by the great majority;' in one union 'not more than one in fifty' accept it; in another 'the large majority refuse it,' &c., &c.

they cannot waste their wages, trusting that the parish will afterwards maintain them in a manner most agreeable to themselves. They would see that they cannot have their pleasure now, and a public provision according to their liking afterwards; but that they must anticipate the 'hardship' at last of being comfortably lodged, as well as clothed and fed, during their pleasure, at the public cost, though under certain tolerable conditions of restraint required by the public expediency. In fact, this 'breaking up of homes,' in the few instances in which it would occur, might have its use as a salutary check on conduct which would lead to that domestic catastrophe. The only case of plausible hardship in the refusal of out-door relief is the very rare and peculiar case of those who, through no lack of industry or prudence on their own part, have been reduced to destitution, and who yet have no friends to help them out of it. But how are parish functionaries with any approximate accuracy to distinguish persons who are in this unusual case from those who have brought their destitution upon themselves? And, after all, what injustice, what hardship, looking of course at the stern realities of life, can we say is done, even to persons brought to unmerited and unfriended beggary, in providing them gratis, during the term of their lives, if need be, with all the necessaries of life, subject only to conditions imposed by public policy? Indeed, persons of this description would be far less disposed than are 'professional' paupers to regard such a provision as a hardship. As a matter of fact no out-door relief 'to speak of' is granted in most of the Irish Unions; yet we never hear this fact proclaimed as one of 'the woes of Ireland.' And the result

in that country is that in proportion to population there is less pauperism than in England, and far less than in Scotland, the favoured land of out-relief! The contrast, indeed, in respect to pauperism between Scotland and England on the one hand, and Ireland on the other, is highly favourable to the latter country, as may be further seen from the following facts. 'The whole number of Irish paupers does not,' says Professor Fawcett, 'amount to half the number that there are in London alone.'[1] At the Conference of London Guardians, held in July, 1875, the Rev. S. A. Barnett, guardian for the pauperized district of Whitechapel, made this statement:—'Poor as the population of Ireland is in comparison with that of London, and unthrifty as the people are by nature—as is apparent directly they come under the English system of out-relief—we find that the number of paupers in proportion to population is less than half that in London; while in Scotland, the people of which are so notoriously thrifty, but where out-relief has been lavishly given, there are about three times as many paupers in proportion to population as in Ireland.'[2] Not less striking is the contrast in point of provident accumulation between the lower classes of the population in Ireland and those of England, where out-relief is so largely granted, as we have seen. The savings of the Irish, placed in joint-stock banks, savings' banks, Government and Indian funds, amounted by the last Report to no less a sum than 70,630,000*l.* The savings of the English poorer or hand-working classes, if we may judge by the statement of Mr. Rathbone, M.P., given at a

[1] Lectures on Pauperism, p. 27.

[2] Report of Poor Law Conferences for 1875, p. 57.

former page,[1] must reach but a far smaller amount, relatively at least to the population and the wealth of the two several countries. In reference to this deficiency of provident accumulation in England the following statement, made by the late Mr. C. Kingsley, is very instructive. Writing on the subject and at the time of the Lancashire 'Cotton Famine' of 1863, this zealous and enlightened friend of the hand-working classes thus expresses himself in a letter to one of the master-manufacturers in that county. 'You must know well (for I do) that most of them (the workpeople) do not know what to do with their money, and waste it on drink, on rich food, on finery, &c. God knows I do not grudge it them; but the waste and the temptation to coarse self-indulgence is extreme. And I was quite shocked, knowing how great the earnings had been during the last few years, to find only 270,000*l.*, if I recollect rightly, in the Lancashire Savings' Banks. I know the sum struck me as one-fourth what it should have been.'[2] This contrast in point of prudential accumulation between the population of Ireland, where out-relief is the rare exception, and the population of England, where that form of relief prevails, affords a strong presumption of the pauperizing effect of out-relief; and would further go to prove that the very few cases of the *bonâ fide* 'breaking up' of homes that would occur, involving hardship, through the offer of 'the House,' would be far more than compensated by the advantages, material as well as moral, which would accrue from the stoppage of relief out of the House.

[1] Page 86.

[2] 'Life of Rev. C. Kingsley,' vol. ii. p. 148.

We are sometimes, however, told that removal to the House involves another 'hardship' in the necessary separation of married couples. But would no hardship arise to ratepayers from an unlimited multiplication of children born and reared in pauperism, whether in 'the House' or out of it? On the subject of the separation of aged husbands and wives, of which we often hear, the following letter appeared from the Clerk of a Poor Law Union.

'HUSBANDS AND WIVES IN WORKHOUSES.

'*To the Editor of the* TIMES.

'Sir,—The recent publication in the newspapers of the new Poor Law Act, whereby it is enacted that Boards of Guardians may, at their discretion, permit certain married couples to live together in the workhouse, seems to imply that guardians had no such power previous to the passing of that Act; whereas by the 98th and 99th Articles of the Poor Law Commissioners' Consolidated Orders such powers were conferred upon Boards of Guardians, the only additional provision being "that every such case shall forthwith be reported to the Local Government Board."

'The Board of Guardians of the Luton Union, acting under the sections above quoted, actually set apart three rooms in their workhouse upwards of fifteen years ago for the reception of such married couples; and, strange to say, these rooms have stood empty up to the present time, no such couples having ever asked for the indulgence thus provided for them.

'I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

'THOMAS ERSKINE AUSTIN,

'Clerk of the Luton Union.

'LUTON, *Sept.* 20, 1876.'

Such then, as above discussed, are the 'hardships' involved in the exclusive offer of 'the House' to pauper-applicants.

But out-relief has been practised not merely from considerations of benevolence, mistaken and short-sighted, as is here contended: it has been practised from considerations also of supposed economy. Such considerations, it may be observed in passing, are of minor moment in a discussion of the question, What are the best means of reducing pauperism? However, it will not be difficult to show that economical considerations point in the opposite direction to out-relief. True it is that in an individual case out-relief is less costly than in-maintenance. But if to ten applicants on a given day the House be offered, it will be refused, as we have already shown on the best authority, by nine out of the ten. According to the same authority it is probable that the one who accepts the House will stay in it no longer than he can help; whereas recipients of out-relief will continue on the pauper-roll as long as they can. Hence it is plain that the saving to be effected by granting out-relief in an individual case is far outweighed by the saving to be effected by the general offer of the House. At the same time it should be remembered that the spirit of pauperism is checked by that offer, inasmuch that, as experts tell us, in Unions where out-relief has been largely reduced, the supply of inmates to the House is also reduced. But the arithmetic of the subject is, after all, the best proof of our point, that out-relief is more costly than in-maintenance; for we learn from the statistics given in the 'Report of the Local Government Board for

1875–6,' that the actual cost of out-relief throughout the kingdom for the half-year ending April, 1875, was nearly double—was, in fact, as $1\frac{1461}{1699}$ is to 1—in comparison with the cost of in-maintenance during that period. Such is the superior 'economy' of out-relief!

In effecting, however, the abolition of this relief, regard should doubtless be had to what may be called the vested interests of those helpless individuals who, having no private means of supporting themselves, and no relatives able and legally liable to support them, have been hitherto *accustomed* to receive it. A date might be fixed after which no fresh applications for this kind of relief should be granted, except in the cases of 'irremovable' sickness or accident; so that due warning would be given against placing an anticipatory dependence upon it.

The practice of granting out-relief to paupers on the sick list might, as above hinted, be advantageously limited to the case of persons whose removal to the House would be dangerous to themselves, or, as when they are suffering from infectious disorders, dangerous to the inmates of the establishment. The number of 'sick paupers' would thus be sensibly reduced. At present the out-door relief of paupers, who are ostensibly sick, greatly encourages the improvidence which takes no account of the possibility of sickness, as it encourages the indulgences also which imperil the continuance of health. At the same time, it opens the door to a variety of fraudulent devices; tempts medical officers to court popularity, or exercise a cheap benevolence, by recommending stimulants and nourishment;

and induces, we are told, much feigning of ill-health on the part of their patients. In cases of real sickness out-relief furnishes relatives with an escape from their natural duty to the sufferers. These relatives, by a strange distinction, feel no shame if their sick friends are supported by the parish out of the Union-house, but would feel themselves disgraced if those friends were supported by the parish within the Union-house. Hence the recommendation of Mr. Longley, the Poor Law Inspector, in his 'Report for 1874–5,' seems amply justified, when he proposes 'the abolition of out-relief to the sick, except when they are incapable of removal.' This case apart, the offer of the House would much winnow the number who apply for 'sick-relief.' Objections of the humanitarian kind may be raised against such a limitation of this kind of relief; but, as it is here contended, humanity would, both from moral and material considerations, be best consulted by 'minimizing' pauperism, which is found to be largely increased by the out-relief of persons whose names stand, with or without due cause, on the Union sick-list. Out-door sick-relief, indeed, has been called the 'back-door of pauperism.' Objection would no doubt be made in particular instances by the pauper himself or his relations, if even in removable cases of sickness no alternative to in-maintenance were offered. It is better, however, that removal to the House, with its attendant inconvenience, should be insisted upon than that pauperism should be encouraged by the granting of out-relief in the case of 'removable' sickness. The humane surgeon would not shrink from the infliction of pain when great benefit is likely to arise from an operation.

In the case of strikes, which is a case of self-inflicted distress, all claims to relief are too untenable to deserve consideration. A body of workers can have no right to strike at the expense of a third party. Legal relief is surely perverted from its proper purpose when it is used as a kind of 'purchase' in the tug of labour against capital. Remonstrance, no doubt, would be heard, even in this case, against refusal of relief, as affecting the families of the persons to whom it is refused. But how are the ratepayers and their families affected in the case? And is it not a law of nature that the consequences of each man's conduct are borne by his family as well as by himself? The argument, too, from the sufferings of wives and children, directed against the ratepayers concerned, tends to the encouragement of strikes, which need no encouragement; whereas it should come home to the strikers themselves, who might fairly be expected, as reasonable men with natural feelings, to think beforehand of the consequences which their own act may inflict upon their families. Nor is the misery which strikes bring upon wives and families by any means limited to the wives and families of the strikers themselves. But the Poor Law seems to give free play to selfishness in the exaction of wages, as well as to sensuality in the consumption of them. The earners are, it seems, to strike at their pleasure for higher wages, as well as to indulge themselves, when they are receiving wages, in drinking, high feeding, marrying, even, as we have seen, sporting; and then other people are to be forced to pay for the adverse consequences which these strikers, drinkers, high-livers, procreators of children, and

sportsmen may, with their eyes open, choose to entail, by their striking, upon themselves and upon their wives and children! Surely they go too far when they claim to be assisted in their strikes by the purse of the public, and to make a 'strike-fund' of the rates. One probable reason why English hand-workers are able to set the fashion of striking to their continental brethren is, that other countries have not our Poor Laws.

I come now to speak of remedial measures to accompany the gradual withdrawal of compulsive relief. Among these may be mentioned the due regulation of Friendly Societies. 'Friendly Societies,' as Mr. Macdonald—a chosen representative of the hand-working classes—observed in his place in Parliament, 'may be of great use in teaching the people to dispense with the Poor Law.' If, however, such societies are to be of use in this way, their rules must be framed on sound principles of finance, and administered wisely and with honesty. But it is hopeless to expect that such rules and such an administration of them will be generally secured until these societies are placed under effectual supervision. In a normal state of things no doubt the management of these societies would be left wholly to the members of them and their officers. But the notorious ignorance and helplessness of a great part of the rural population—owing in great measure to their childish reliance on extraneous support—make it necessary for their interests that the constitution and working of these societies should come under the control of public authority. They must be deprived of the liberty of ruining themselves! A Guardian of the poor, representative at a recent Poor Law Con-

ference, stated on the occasion that 'A great many of these Friendly Societies are not worth ten years' purchase. Some may be worth fifteen years', and others twenty years', purchase. I have seen,' adds this speaker, 'two or three Friendly Societies broken up in my own village; and, after men have subscribed twenty years to them, they have been thrown upon the parish.'

In point of fact, cases constantly occur, in different places, of the collapse of these societies, and of consequent loss and disappointment to the members, not to mention the discouragement thereby given to provident action[1] on the part of those who witness this loss and disappointment.

[1] Since these words were written, the following instructive letter appeared on the subject:—

'RURAL FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

'To the Editor of the *Times*.

'Sir,—I am glad to see from Mr. Magniac's letter that attention is being directed to the financial position of the rural clubs, and that the means of putting them on a sounder footing are being considered. This is the first fruits of the recent Friendly Societies Act.

'In some clubs insolvency has gone too far to be really ameliorated; for these the only remedy is dissolution and an equitable division of the funds, or the entire reconstitution of the society, applying the existing funds as far as they will go and adopting a properly graduated scale of contributions for such additional benefits as may be required. In other cases, a judicious admixture of the two remedies—viz., some increase in the contributions and some decrease in the benefits—will go very far towards promoting practical solvency.

'I consider that the present insolvency has been mainly brought about from three causes:—1. Inadequate rates of contribution. 2. Lax administration of the sick fund. 3. Prolongation of sick pay in small societies. A safe scale of contributions should be graduated according to age, and should treat the sick pay after the age of 75 as a pension certain for the remainder of life. In those societies the sickness experience of which I have investigated I have found that from and after the age of 75 all the members come on and remain permanently on the sick fund at the lowest reduced rate of pay. I do not believe

Either the rules are framed without due regard to the proportion which the number of the members, or

that any of the existing tables of sickness experience can be relied upon after the age of 75 for practical purposes. A set of model rates will be found in the Actuarial Report on Friendly Societies, page 100.

'A strict administration of the sick fund is imperative, and on this point committees of management have hitherto been largely to blame for not exercising sufficient firmness in checking malingering. The returns of some sick lists would show nearly a clean bill during the harvest or when wages were high, and then rise to their old level when work began to get scarce. In a case now before me there is a suspicious recurrence of the same number of weeks' sickness every year to the same member. The only remedy for malingering—which, I may observe, is infectious—is a direct and annual levy of the whole body for the excess of sick allowances actually paid away over those provided for by the tables on which the contributions are based. The members will then find that they have to pay out of their own pockets for their neighbours' indulgences. Prolongation of sick pay has had disastrous effects in some small societies, one or two permanent pensioners, at comparatively early ages, inflicting serious damage upon the funds. I think, as a rule, relief should not extend beyond a year, unless the society consists of 300 members, and even then the number of such pensioners should be limited. But, if the rural clubs would federate themselves, and charge the sick allowances upon a common fund (as many lodges of the affiliated orders do), the duration of the sick benefit might be safely extended. The existing local organization need not be destroyed.

'It has on several occasions been suggested that the rural clubs should restrict themselves to administering the sick fund, and should pay over to the Post Office the contributions necessary to provide the pension or fixed allowance after, say, 75. As I was desirous of making a specific recommendation to this effect in the case of some societies the affairs of which were then before me, I wrote to the Postmaster-General, inquiring whether any arrangement of this nature could be made with the Department. The only reply I received was a reference to a mass of printed rules. I can only regret that Lord John Manners (or, perhaps, I rather should say the official who wrote the letter) does not appreciate the national importance of any measure that would so strengthen the Friendly Societies of the country that the allowances in old age would possess the solid certainty of a security resting on the Imperial guarantee. I should have thought

the amount of their several subscriptions, bears to the amount of the relief promised; or those persons to whom the funds are entrusted prove unworthy of the trust; or, which is not an uncommon case, the younger and more numerous members of a society of the kind break it up and, as the phrase is, 'divide the box' equally with the older members, to the manifest injury of the latter. Irregularities like these, fatal to the realisation of the relief promised, fatal also to the efficiency of these societies as means of 'educating' the wages-earning classes in self-reliance, can be prevented only by the imperative intervention of Government-authority in settling their rules and in securing the due administration of their affairs. Of course, the Poor-Law system itself is the most formidable antagonist to the success of these societies, however well they may be regulated, or of any other expedients for preparing the mass to meet the abolition of that system. It has created a habit of dependence on itself, which is hostile to all methods of promotiug self-dependence, and hostile therefore to its own abolition. Thus, the Poor Law is regarded as 'the best Benefit Society, because everything is taken out and nothing put in.' An agricultural labourer of forty years ago

that the policy of directly interesting the labouring classes in the integrity of the National Debt would not have been an unworthy object of a Conservative Government. But perhaps Mr. Magniac may be better able to make his voice heard at the General Post Office, and I sincerely trust that he will make the endeavour, and with better success than I met with.

'Your obedient servant,

'RALPH P. HARDY.

'21, Fleet-street, Aug. 24, 1876.'

could perceive the antagonism of Poor Law Relief to Friendly Societies, and asserted in evidence to the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners that 'the parish is a cause of the break-down of Provident Societies.'[1] Even in Scotland, as the Report of the Friendly Societies Commission tells us, 'there is a growing class who feel that they need not insure in any Friendly Society, as the Poor Law provides them with a certainty of sick pay.' Hence these societies, even when placed on a sound basis, will not be duly efficacious in teaching the people to dispense with the Poor Law, until the prospect is opened of an abolition of the Poor Law itself. With a view, however, to that consummation, they deserve the fullest encouragement and the positive protection of compulsory law.[2] I would only suggest, further, that the object of these societies would advantageously be extended to insurance against old age as well as against sickness.

Another important remedial measure is offered by the Act for facilitating the purchase of small annuities, and for insuring payments after death. The provisions of this Act may be briefly described as assuring, on the payment of a monthly premium, an annuity which the wages-earner shall begin to receive at the age of fifty-five years, or a sum not exceeding 100*l.* payable upon

[1] Report of 1834, p. 335.

[2] For further information on the subject of Friendly Societies, the reader is referred to the paper upon it and the ensuing discussion, given in the 'Report of the Poor Law Conference' of the South-Eastern District, held in October, 1875. Reports of the several conferences of this kind which have taken place of late years are published, in a volume for each year, by Messrs. Knight and Co., Fleet Street.

his death.[1] In order, however, to the dispauperizing operation of this Act, the advantages which it holds out must be more widely made known than is at present the case among the wages-earning population. A country clergyman with whom the writer is acquainted had some success in recommending these annuities to the attention of his parishioners; and it might be hoped that, were the plan of them brought more generally under the notice of the class for whose benefit it was intended, they would take more frequent advantage of its benefits. No doubt in this, as in other instances, the Poor Law itself crops up as the great obstacle to the success of any remedial measures proposed to pave the way to its abolition. This great enemy to all self-help, with its enervating provisions against the adverse contingencies of life, has the effect of neutralising all efforts, like that of the above-mentioned Act, to assist wages-earners in making provision for themselves against the time when failing strength shall compel them to leave off work. Poor Law, in short, obviates all measures for counteracting its own ill effects. In the present case its adverse operation would be as thus: A, while in the receipt of wages, has through many years exercised some self-denial in paying his monthly premium towards this annuity, and has begun to reap the benefit of his provident conduct; but his neighbour B, who saved nothing from wages of no less amount, being now disabled, receives a weekly allowance from the parish equal in amount to the weekly proportion of A's annuity. A young wages-

[1] The tables and regulations for these annuities and life insurances can be inspected at any post-office.

earner sees that A is practically no better off for his provident conduct than the improvident B, and therefore only too naturally declines to put in for the annuity. Nothing, in short, but the prospect of the abolition of out-door relief, and ultimately of all Poor Law relief, will ensure any extensive adoption of this method of small annuities; while the effect of such an adoption of it would be to prepare the way for the abolition of that relief.

The wider use of Savings' Banks would be a great step towards fostering habits of self-dependence, and educating wages-earners up to the point of self-support. Some legislation, however, on a comprehensive scale, seems necessary in order to put Savings' Banks into a more efficient condition. At present there are the Old Savings' Banks and the Post Office Savings' Bank, of which the former give rather a higher rate of interest, and the latter gives greater facilities in putting in and taking out deposits. Why cannot the two be amalgamated, and the advantages both of the higher interest and the greater convenience be combined, the national credit being the security offered? Of course to the success of Savings' Banks, however well they may be organized, the Poor Law itself emerges as the great obstacle, with its standing offer of a gratuitous maintenance to the improvident. A noteworthy instance of the operation of this law in checking resort to the Savings' Bank was given in the following statement of a Vestry Clerk at Islington, in evidence before the Poor Law Enquiry Commission:—'We have tried to make Savings' Banks available against this course of improvidence, but without effect. Formerly, however, their wives have

made small deposits unknown to their husbands. If the husbands knew they had the money, they would beat them to force it from them. I am a member of a Savings' Bank, and have seen the poor women bring their little pittances there. They have besought me to keep it secret from their husbands.' This evidence related indeed to the state of things under the old Poor Law; but it is certain that the present Poor Law, which is but a modification of the older law, produces in its measure the same effect in checking resort to Savings' Banks, and, indeed, to any method of provident accumulation. Of this fact an example, credibly related to the present writer, was lately given in the failure of an attempt made by a philanthropic nobleman, in a pauperized district of the South West of England, to induce the cottagers on his extensive property to invest in the Savings' Bank. To encourage them to begin this practice, he himself put into the Bank five shillings to the name of each one of the cottagers, in the hope that they would keep adding something from time to time to this first deposit. His hopes, however, were in no long time frustrated, for, after a few fresh deposits had been made, all the depositors withdrew their money, including the five shillings which their landlord had placed to the account of each of them! However, the due organization of the Savings' Bank system may, by holding out greater advantages, be expected to encourage habits of prudent accumulation in the more self-respecting part of the population. At the same time the gradual restriction of such relief, and the prospect of its abolition, will stimulate wages-earners to the more general use of the Savings' Bank, as of other methods

of turning to future account the surplus of their wages, now spent in self-indulgence to the amount of many tens of millions. It has sometimes been suggested that, with the view of promoting provident habits in these classes, greater facilities might be given for the direct investment of savings in the Public Funds, from which they would obtain a higher interest than that which they now obtain from the Savings' Banks. The example of France is pointed to, where a large portion of the population are fund-holders in small sums. No obstacle but that dislike of novel procedure, and that *vis inertiæ*, which are at once elements of our national weakness and strength, seems to present itself in this country against granting similar opportunities for the secure and profitable investment of savings.

But no method, well as it may be devised, for aiding the practice of provident accumulation, will be adopted by the classes in question, unless its existence be made known among them, and its advantages brought home to their apprehensions. Men of education and influence, living amid the agricultural population, and taking an interest in their general well-being, would greatly aid in promoting the adoption of such methods by using opportunities of showing that class that they have a duty to society in the formation of provident habits; of rousing them to a sense of the benefits which would accrue to themselves and those dependent on them from the acquisition of self-secured independence; and of explaining to them the nature and advantages of those methods which are open to them for accomplishing that object. Not only this, but opportunities of employing such methods must be placed within easy reach of them. So

great is their repugnance to any unusual exertion even in their own behalf, generated by habits of dependence on the parish, that these opportunities must be brought almost to their very doors, if they are duly to take advantage of them.

Among measures which may tend to 'educate' the hand-working classes to self-reliance instead of *parish-reliance* may be mentioned a form of relief, sanctioned by the Poor Law Act of 1834, but not often brought into practice—relief by way of loan. This form of help might obviously often save a self-respecting poor man from becoming a pauper. It has indeed been objected that in many instances the loans would not be repaid, or be even recoverable by the method prescribed in the Act, namely, attachment of the borrower's wages for gradual repayment; and upon this supposition it has been justly remarked that more moral harm would be done by loan-relief than by the usual practice of gift-relief. The objection, however, will not hold good, if due discretion be used by Boards of Guardians with regard to the particular persons to whom loans should be made, and if repayment be duly enforced. That the practice of loan-relief is not liable to the aforesaid objection appears from occasional statements of guardians themselves, from among which shall be cited the following suggestive statement made by the guardian of a large parish, representative at a recent Poor Law Conference. 'As to relief by loans,' said this gentleman, 'we have given a great deal of money in that way and have always got it back, until just at the present time we were obliged to prosecute in the case of a man who would not pay, but has plenty of money. We put him into the County

Court, and got an order that he was to pay in a month. This is the only case we have had where we were in any danger of losing money lent on loan.'[1] It cannot be doubted that legal loan-relief may be worked with the same success as that which attends the operations of various voluntary loan-societies existing among us. An instance of its success in one way in an individual case is given in the recent Report of a Poor Law Inspector. A woman applying to the Board of Guardians for relief was offered it in the form of a loan. When she was made clearly to understand that she would have to repay the amount granted, her remark was, 'Then I might as well not receive it at all.' 'That is just what we think,' said the Chairman; and the applicant went away without relief, finding, it would seem, that she could dispense with its help.

It may be observed that the pauperizing effects of gift-relief would hardly proceed from loan-relief, which, judiciously practised, would bring home to the mind of the recipient some sense at least of obligation for the aid of his neighbours. It would militate less than gift-relief against his honest self-respect; for on his payment of the debt he would feel that he had done all that was justly required of him. Even in the case of gift-relief a few instances have been known of recipients who afterwards, in more prosperous circumstances, have repaid the money-value of the relief which they had received. But the granting of loan-relief to honest applicants would effectually remind them that the pecuniary help of others is properly a favour, and

[1] Speech of Rev. E. Hawley at the Leicester Poor Law Conference, Nov. 24, 1875.

not a right, and would put paupers in a truer position towards the rate-paying classes; and thus, as well as by 'helping people to help themselves,' it would be a step in the direction of dispauperization.[1]

An advance in the Anti-Poor Law direction would also be made by the enforcement of another neglected provision of the Poor Law itself, requiring the maintenance of poor relations in the direct line. Not only is this requirement all but universal in the Poor Laws of continental countries, but in some of them it is extended to relatives in the collateral line also; and in all of them it seems to be far from a dead letter. In France, the maintenance of the indigent and helpless by their relatives in the direct line is provided for by several Articles in the Civil Code;[2] and, as the present writer has been informed, this provision of law is so clear a reflection of public sentiment as that it is by no means uncommon for persons of the humbler class in that country to postpone marriage to the maintenance of parents. When the duty of supporting distressed relatives has come to be recognised in England, great will be the reduction of pauperism, and more widely will the necessity of provident conduct be felt than is at present the case. When this duty is enforced, the several members of a family will be stimulated to a wholesome vigilance over each other's conduct by the

[1] According to Mussulman doctrine, lending money to the poor 'is a more worthy action, and will have a greater reward from God, than giving alms.' Whether or no this doctrine flows from a perception that a loan has a less demoralizing effect than a gift, such is the fact, as stated by Mr. Schuyler in his 'Turkestan.'

[2] Report on Foreign Poor Laws, pp. 162–3.

consideration that they are liable to the pecuniary consequences of each other's idleness or improvidence. A clear gain to society will accrue from this liability, by which the members of a family will be bound in a sort of 'frank pledge' for their mutual good conduct. It may be added, that the exclusive offer of 'the House' to the destitute will of itself act as a sharp spur to their sustentation by their better-to-do relatives; for these latter, as was noticed in the case of sick paupers, feel at the thought of their friends' going into 'the House' a shame which is not felt at their receiving out-door relief. The chief cause of this unreasonable distinction is that a sojourn in the House is a more patent and permanent proof of a pauperized condition than the short interview which is necessary with the Relieving Officer for the reception of out-door relief. In short, people feel it as a disgrace, not that their kinsfolk should *be* paupers, but that they should *seem* to be such. The same feeling of shame, not at pauperism, but at its appearance, is seen in the facts that the publication of lists of paupers for the information of the payers of the poor-rates is found to have the effect of lessening the number of paupers, and that to such publication much dislike has been shown by inveterate paupers and their relatives.

It may be observed, in passing, that the restoration of the lost feeling of family-duty among the lower classes would re-act favourably upon classes above them, in reference to a common selfishness in this matter; for every educated reader of these pages has probably within the range of his acquaintance met with instances of persons fallen into distress through no

glaring fault of theirs, nay, perhaps, even through the contrary, who yet have been left by near relatives, liberal in expressions of pity, to keep their heads above water as they best could; or who, if that distress were incurred through weak compliance or other venial folly, have asked for help from those relatives, and have received nothing but barren reproaches as to the past,—in some cases even those who have been helped not helping their relatives in return. It is probable that a prevailing system of law, which popularizes the abandonment of destitute relatives to public aid, countenances this mercenary conduct even in the higher classes. At any rate, the sense of family-duty will be powerfully stimulated in the humbler classes by the offer of the House to destitute persons.

There are not a few who think that the transition from a state of dependence on the parish to a state of manly self-dependence, would be softened by enabling the agricultural labourers, in still greater numbers than is now the case, to rent, or, if they shall save sufficient means from their wages, to purchase at the market value, plots of ground which, with the help of their families, they would cultivate in their now more numerous leisure hours. The French correspondent, whose remarks have been quoted at a preceding page, ascribes the more frugal habits of the French peasantry not only to their independence of poor laws, but also to their desire to become possessors of small portions of the soil; and he suggests that, were more opportunities for this purpose given to the English agricultural labourers, it would supply them with an additional motive to form habits of prudential parsimony.

And, certainly, if they are to form such habits, some decided steps must be taken in the way of encouragement. The practice of letting allotments, by no means infrequent, is found to have a dispauperizing effect on the allottees. And, probably, if the owners of land, who as a body show much kindly sympathy in the condition of the cottagers around them, would give increased facilities for the renting or even the purchase of small parcels of their ground, they would be preparing the way still more towards the detachment of that class from their demoralizing, enfeebling, and, in truth, poverty-creating dependence on a maintenance abstracted from the substance of other classes, and, to a very great extent, from that of a class only just outside of the verge of pauperism; nay, and *in effect*, from the substance of the more industrious and provident members of their own class.[1] An increase in the numerical extent of peasant proprietorship might contribute to restore a healthier state of things in rural districts. How is it that the term 'peasantry of England' sounds strange to our ears, and that the humbler grade in country districts are now only known in common parlance as 'labourers' and 'paupers'? This suggestive change of nomenclature is perhaps owing to the fact that from being to a considerable extent proprietors, often in the form of copyholders, of their tenements with portions of land attached, or, as they were called in feudal language, 'villeins regardant,' they have all descended to the position of mere

[1] It must not be forgotten that landowners are often debarred, as having only a life-interest in their estates, from selling even small plots of ground.

tenants-at-will of their cottages. Although it be but the pleasing fiction of a poet that

> There was a time, ere England's woes began,
> When every rood of ground maintained its man—

yet it is no fiction that there was a time when a large proportion of the rural population held land in small portions. A writer in the 'Quarterly Review' of July, 1875,[1] speaks of the time as 'not over distant' when 'nine-tenths or rather nineteen-twentieths' of cultivated England were nothing more than an aggregate of small estates and farms, mostly the former. We learn from Macaulay that even in the latter half of the seventeenth century not less than 'a hundred and sixty thousand proprietors, who with their families must have made up more than a seventh of the population, derived their substance from little freehold estates.' Thus, then, two centuries ago—that is, in the reign of Charles II.—more than one in seven of the heads of families in England were in possession of land. The coalition of these small properties into larger estates and territorial domains was, no doubt, owing to that 'attraction of gravitation,' which operates with regard to all property, and by which the larger mass draws to it the smaller bodies around it. It is, however, at least a probable conjecture that this agglomeration of small properties into territorial possessions was accelerated by the operation of the Poor-Law system in destroying the independent spirit of the peasantry, and disposing them to sell, for tempting sums of hard cash, their interests in the soil to those moneyed men who desired to add 'house to house and field to field.' The money would

[1] Article, 'Jamaica.'

soon be gone, and the descendants of the sellers would be left as mere tenants-at-will of their cottages, with or without parcels of land attached, 'labourers,' looking in case of need to poor-rates for relief. In fact, this class would obtain, in exchange for their small proprietorships, a money-price, plus the legal claim to be provided for at the public cost; for while they were owners, they would be debarred from that claim. Whether, however, or no, the general absorption of peasant properties into larger estates was favoured by the demoralizing influence and temptation of Poor-Law relief, yet even now some return is being made to the earlier state of things, in regard to the possession of an interest in the soil, by means of the Freehold Land and Building Societies, and through an increased willingness on the part of landed proprietors to let, if not to sell, small plots of ground to cottagers. The progress of this movement may be looked to for aid in promoting the material and social well-being of these classes, and thus for in smoothing the transition which shall put them upon their own manly resources for support.

It is notorious how largely up to a recent period the country people have parted with their valuable 'common-rights'—the last remains of the old Anglo-Saxon 'folkland'—for sums of money, which naturally would soon melt in their hands. The 'common-rights' which have been sold cannot of course be recovered; but it seems much to be desired, in counteraction of pauperism, that the remainder of these rights should be preserved. The following considerations, as stated by an able journalist, tell powerfully in favour of the preservation of the still remaining rights of this kind. Speaking of

the 'effects of the enclosures on the class whose rights in commons have been extinguished,' the writer continues: 'It is difficult to say that these effects have been satisfactory. The money paid in compensation has soon been spent, the allotments have been too small or too barren to yield their owners much profit, and in the meantime the owners have lost the sense of *quasi-possession* which the right of pasture gave them, and have lost, too, the *motive for thrift* afforded by the prospect of feeding a cow for nothing, provided they could get together the money to buy one. In these and other ways the condition of the most poor *as a class* has been changed for the worse by the wholesale enclosure of commons, even though the interests of the particular members of the class whose rights have been extinguished have been saved.'[1] However, by thrift like that of the frugal peasantry of France and Belgium, our country people in receipt of good wages may to a considerable extent accumulate sums sufficient to regain in other forms an interest in the soil, which would aid in inspiring them with an independence of pauper relief as well as in enabling them to do without it. To the agricultural labourer and often also to the artizan and mechanic in towns the purchase of a cottage or a plot of ground, if still more frequent opportunities were given for such an investment of his savings, would be an object of legitimate ambition, tending to elevate his sense of self-respect and his position in the social scale.

State emigration has often been suggested as a means of drawing off the surplus numbers of a population, to the benefit of themselves and of those who

[1] *Pall Mall Gazette*, Feb. 12, 1876.

remained in the country. Some political economists, however, including Professor Fawcett, have objected to State emigration, as 'having the same inherent vice as the Poor Laws, discouraging providence, and taxing the prudent in order to give help to the imprudent.' It would, as the Professor in effect observes, unfairly place the improvident who might emigrate at the public expense on a level with the provident, who might be willing to emigrate at their own expense, and so discourage provident saving with a view to emigration. But, as it is, we unfortunately have the Poor Laws in full swing amongst us; and with the object of getting rid of these laws it might be expedient to turn their very principle, when possible, against their continuance, and assist able-bodied paupers to emigrate, in order to dispauperize those who remain behind. We shall think it too late to object to State emigration as a boon to improvidence, if we consider the boons which we offer to it at home. It seems, indeed, to be straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel to maintain the improvident here and yet to boggle at State emigration as encouraging improvidence. By the co-operation of our Settlement Laws with our Poor Laws we have caused a redundancy of population in particular localities; what more obvious course than to reduce this redundancy by subsidizing its emigration? To the objection that this were to encourage improvidence it may be a satisfactory answer that by our laws we have created this improvidence, and that we ought to take steps to remedy its effect in a mass of pauperism. The colonists need abour, and some of our able-bodied labourers need permanent employment; why not aid in bringing the two

parties together, in giving the demand its supply? Nothing seems to hinder it but that *laissez aller* style of government, that blind adherence to mere routine of which as a nation we are fond.

Government, acting in concert with Boards of Guardians, might establish in those localities where there is a known and acknowledged surplusage of labour a machinery for assisting emigration; and to able-bodied applicants relief might be offered in the form of a free pass to some colony where labour is in demand, and is consequently well remunerated. Some of the Colonial States themselves have already assisted in defraying the expense of this profitable emigration to their own shores; and it is not improbable that they would be willing to co-operate still more largely in any well-organized Government scheme for the same purpose. Such a scheme, indeed, unless it form part of a plan for the extinction of compulsory relief, is fatally open to Professor Fawcett's objections. At present emigration as a corrective of pauperism, like all other agencies directed to that purpose, is frustrated by pauperism itself. Those who at present emigrate are chiefly of the non-pauperized class—small capitalists—hand-workers who have exercised thrift with a view to meet the expense of emigration and settlement—the more skilful and enterprizing of the class, who may reckon with certainty on obtaining suitable remuneration in the land of their choice; in short, just that portion of the population whose continuance in the country would be conducive to the national wealth. These men leave the country, and leave also behind them the slothful, the unskilful, the unthrifty, the men of pauperized minds.

Of the unwillingness of men of the last description to emigrate a notable instance was lately mentioned in one of our principal journals. A clergyman, we are told, had recommended a middle-aged farm-labourer to emigrate to New Zealand. The clergyman drew a glowing picture of that country, and the farm-labourer listened with interest. 'High wages, plenty of food, a good home, excellent climate,' and other attractions were spoken of; and, to give his hearer a final idea of the well-being of the humbler classes there, the clergyman ended by saying, 'There is no workhouse: think of that!' Next day the farm-labourer returned and astonished the clergyman by refusing to go. He was pressed to say why, but hesitated. Was he satisfied with the wages? 'Oh, yes.' With the food? Yes, and so on with the other advantages. What, then, was the objection? 'Well, sir,' said the man, 'you said there was no workhouse—I don't like that.' In fact, it is poor-relief that hinders the emigration that would aid to render poor-relief unnecessary. Most of the suggestions now offered for facilitating the ultimate abolition of the Poor Law system are to be regarded as suitable to the transitional state alone before the compulsory relief system is abolished. They are suggested as parts of a comprehensive scheme of social and economic reform with a view to the abolition of that system; while taken irrespectively of such a consummation they would be open to the description of mere shifts and expedients, temporary lenitives, but in the result aggravations, far from remedies, of the gangrene of pauperism. But a scheme of State emigration, as a remedial and auxiliary measure directed towards that object, would appa-

rently facilitate its attainment, and aid in rendering less harsh and abrupt the transition of the population from a dependence on poor-rates to an honest dependence on themselves.

Meantime, the improved education of the rising generation may be looked to—certainly it ought to be capable of being looked to—as a means of improving their practical notions, of preparing them to exercise due self-restraint and rational forethought, and of disciplining them to meet the realities of life. Any education, deserving the epithet of 'good,' of the wages-earning classes would be such as should implant in them some correct notions as to the duty which they owe to society in this matter. In any system of primary education fitted to the wants of the age it would be made one of the express objects to instil these notions into their minds, and to teach them to look forward to the time when they will have to put them into practice; when, like real men, they will have to depend on themselves, under Providence, for success in the arduous, but bracing and hopeful, 'battle of life' and conflict with circumstances. No scheme of national education can be thought complete unless it include education in sentiments and practical notions, as well as in intellectual quickness and attainment. If it be the business of education to teach children what they are to be and to do when they become men, it ought in this case not merely to teach them to read, write, and sum, but to inspire them, among other wholesome sentiments, with that of a true manliness, which would forbear to be beholden to others for any means of subsistence which self-help could obtain. To this point is

the following observation of a Poor Law Inspector, Dr. Clutterbuck, in his Report for 1874–5:[1] 'It is to the extinguishing of the pauper spirit by the creation of a rightful sense of self-respect that we must look forward in all our schemes for the amelioration of the poor man's lot. Every scheme of education which fails to keep steadily in view this especial object must, more or less, defeat itself. The education which creates or increases this principle of self-respect imparts real, vital, formative knowledge, upon which all true progress depends.' Such teaching would enter alike into the religious and secular education; for it is equally in accordance with the precepts and example of the great Apostle of the Gentiles and with the first principles of political economy, as well as with the promptings of a right-minded regard for the interests of others. Such teaching is already condensed in the words of a well-known formula of religious instruction, by which the catechumen is taught to avow that 'not to covet or desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour truly to get his own living,' is part of his 'duty to his neighbour.' No education, indeed, can be expected *of itself* to diminish sensibly the mass of pauperism which presses upon the community. The mere attempt to teach men by schools an honest dependence on themselves must be hopeless so long as they are taught by the law to depend upon their neighbours. Witness the case of highly-educated Scotland, which, since the introduction of Poor Law in 1845, has been unlearning, as we have seen, more and more of her characteristic thrift. But, as one of the remedial measures to accom-

[1] See p. 206 of the Report of the Local Government Board.

pany the gradual abolition of compulsory poor-relief, an education directed to the improvement of the qualities of the population in a social point of view, as well as to the cultivation of their intellects, may be of no little avail. The mere possession of the *power* to earn a lifelong maintenance favours the will to do so; and thus education, in its merely intellectual aspect, may act as the corks by which men learn to swim, so as to be able afterwards to trust to their own unaided exertions. At present it is the Poor Law which 'educates' the poorer class to dependence on extraneous help, combined with perverted notions of a right in 'other men's goods.' It need hardly be added that parents of that class, under the influence of such an 'education,' have but little notion of the duty of bringing up their children with a love of honest independence and a manly scorn of wilful pauperism.[1]

Lessons and admonitions pointing to the necessity of self-help are, in fact, liberally bestowed for the most part upon young people of the upper middle class, the class of professional men and of educated men with moderate fixed incomes. Young persons of this class are often reminded that they will have themselves only to

[1] Even in the matter of education itself it is to be regretted that a further lesson of dependence on the poor-rates should have been lately given by the provision of the Public Education Act, compelling guardians to pay out of the rates the expense of educating the children of parents who profess inability to pay for it themselves, *and who yet are not to be regarded by the law as paupers!* This provision, as it has been well said, 'is nothing else but creating a new class of paupers.' It seems to be the one-idea'd pursuit of a public good, resulting in the public damage in other respects—purchasing the benefit of general education at a further expense of the self-dependent qualities of the hand-working classes, who are thus taught to look to the pockets of the ratepayers for the accessories as well as for the necessaries of life.

trust to for maintenance in the social position in which they were placed by their birth, and for the attainment of the comforts to which they may reasonably aspire. And these admonitions are by no means without profit; for we constantly witness instances of young men of this class who abstain from marriage till they find themselves in a position to maintain a family, who are industrious in their callings, prudent in conduct, temperate in habit, and ready to go anywhere, do anything, and submit to anything consistent with honour and self-respect, such as driving cattle or shoeing horses in the Colonies, in order to secure for themselves a competent or even a bare maintenance. Few of the sons of this class but act in accordance with the training to self-help which they have received. When we hear of young men bred at the public schools and universities willing to gain their livelihood as head-gardeners or grooms, or of women, who have been brought up in homes of affluence or comfort, undertaking menial employments as 'lady-helps,' governesses teaching 'accomplishments,' but acting also as domestics on salaries which upper domestics would scorn to take,[1] we cannot but contrast their position

[1] The poverty and distress in an educated class, indicated by such notices as the following in the *Times* of June 23, 1877, are striking when viewed in contrast with the high wages given to hand-workers, and for the most part recklessly spent:—

'GOVERNESSES OF ALL WORK.—"Fair Play" asks us to publish the following reply by a clergyman's wife to a young lady advertising for the situation of governess:—"June 7. Madam,—In reply to your letter of this morning I beg to say we are desirous of meeting with a governess for our four elder children—two girls and two boys—their ages are 9, 7, 6, and 4 respectively. Our girls have not yet got beyond simple tunes in music. Are you a good needlewoman, and can you cut

with that of numbers of hand-workers earning weekly from three to ten, even twelve pounds, which are chiefly spent in self-gratification, with the refuge of the parish complacently in prospect. And, it may be asked, why should not the children of the mechanics, artizans, handicraftsmen, and agricultural labourers of England be taught, if not at home, yet at least in their schools, to exercise, when they grow up, the same firm and self-respecting virtues?—be taught to trust to their own exertions for lifelong maintenance, and to feel shame at looking to the forced and often grudged and hardly-wrung contributions of others, or even to their voluntary alms, except under the very rare pressure of unavoidable necessity? Are these classes themselves sunk so low in pauperism as that such lessons should be thrown away even upon their children?

However, all those amongst us who gain their livelihood by the exertion of their physical faculties ought, in order to their dispauperization, if for no other reason, to be impressed, whether in youth or manhood, with the truth that it is a simple matter of honesty to practise thrift, lest they should afterwards be forced to throw themselves as a burden upon their neighbours. When some one avowed that 'somehow he could never make up his mind to be economical,' the just answer

out and make children's frocks? As I should require you to attend to their wardrobes, assist with other sewings, wash and dress the two elder boys, dress the girls' hair, to walk out with them, and to make yourself generally useful, would you on an emergency object to help to make the beds and wash up the breakfast and tea things? Are you a member of the Church of England and a communicant?" The salary offered to a lady possessing all these desirable and useful accomplishments was 20*l.* per annum.'

was, 'You might as well say that you never could make up your mind to be honest.'

Before quitting the subject of educational agencies in dispauperization, two practical suggestions shall be offered in reference to the training of the myriads of children—amounting, according to recent returns, to about 200,000 in England—whom their parents, taught by law to disregard all relative and social duty, have thrown for maintenance upon the parish. The manner of bringing up these multitudinous cadets of pauperism ought assuredly to be such as should qualify them to earn their own subsistence as adults. At present, however, through the false economy which looks at nothing but the avoidance of immediate outlay, their teaching is usually of the slenderest and most inefficient. In most of our Unions it is limited, with degrees of attainment varying according to the qualifications of the respective schoolmasters, to reading, writing, and arithmetic. With these sole accomplishments the young pauper commonly steps forth from the workhouse into the outer world at the age of seventeen years, one of the most helpless members of the community; and probably, unless he joins the host of vagrants or criminals, he returns to 'the House' a relapsed pauper. An industrial education—true economy as well as charity would combine to grant such an education—is the kind of education wanted for these homeless outcasts. 'What we want,' says Professor Villari, a distinguished Neapolitan, speaking of his own country, 'is that kind of industrial school which transforms paupers and vagrants into workmen.' What we also want in England is the same kind of

training; for paupers and vagrants abound in wealthy England no less than in the poorer province of Naples.

The other suggestion towards the dispauperizing education of the rising generation is, that in all schools of primary instruction, pauper schools or other, the elements of domestic economy should be taught to the daughters of the hand-working and poorer classes. The helplessness and wastefulness too often witnessed in their households—owing in great measure to the pervading influence of pauperizing laws—are by the law of reaction a 'factor' in the augmentation of pauperism. Hence a rudimentary instruction in the several branches of domestic economy might be looked to as means towards reducing pauperism, and facilitating the transition from dependence on the parish to honest and intelligent self-dependence. Subjoined is an extract from 'The Times' of November 6, 1876, containing some valuable hints towards the general cultivation of one important branch of domestic economy, as a part of the teaching in elementary schools.[1]

[1] 'DOLES.—Doubtless a loaf of bread was a gift more prized centuries ago than it is in the present day. A poor old widow receives it as her born right, more or less grumblingly, while a sturdy beggar looks at it with contempt and exchanges it for a glass of gin if he can. Some Parliamentary returns have been in course of publication since 1868, with occasional intermissions, which give the amount distributed annually in each county of England and Wales in "doles in kind," being chiefly bread. The sums given in each county vary considerably. In Norfolk the enormous sum of 9,983*l.* is awarded annually, while in Cardigan it is only 21*l.* In Surrey it is 7,620*l.*, and it exceeds in Lancashire and Middlesex (exclusive of London and Westminster), as well as in Suffolk, 6,000*l.* a year. In some cases a discretion has been given by the pious founders of these doles to the trustees to spend the money in other things than bread. The work does not seem to excite

The abolition of Poor Laws, however gradual, involves without doubt the necessity of a contempo-

a lively interest among trustees so far as we have been able to observe, and in many cases they would be glad to be relieved of the trust. In Warwick beef is given away. In other places clothing is distributed.

'If the Charity Commissioners would enlarge the authority of trustees to spend the money otherwise than in bread, some useful impetus might be given to the teaching, in elementary schools, of "domestic economy," so wisely introduced as a subject of national education into the Code. But at present the Education Department has contented itself with introducing the words into the Code, and leaving them to fructify, without establishing any system or appointing any officers whose business it should be to look after the matter. Domestic economy has held a place in the Code for two years, but there appears no evidence that schools have as yet earned any of the grants of 4*s*. Mr. Colt Williams, Inspector of Schools, who thinks the introduction of cookery and domestic economy excellent, asks who is to pay for it. We answer, the fees of learners, the present bread doles, and Government grants. The bread doles especially might, on the *cy-près* doctrine, be made of use in establishing village schools of cookery, which can hardly be said to exist at present. So few are they that they may be named. Cookery is taught in the Board Schools of London, in a school at St. Mary's, Soho, and in elementary schools at Watford, at Walton, and Stokesay, in Shropshire, and in a school fostered by Mr. Browne Clayton, on his estate in Ireland, where children of the poor are taught cookery very successfully. The inspector, Mr. Pennethorne, commends its introduction, and says the School Board at Newcastle has determined to make a small experiment. He and Mr. Williams and Mr. Legard are the only Inspectors who notice cookery. The numerous local cookery schools hitherto established have taught ladies chiefly and domestic servants, but not children. A little cookery is taught in some of the female training colleges, but next to nothing in elementary schools, and unless some active steps are taken soon by the Education Department the food division of the Code will die of inanition, while everyone proclaims its national importance. There are at least 5,000 villages of sufficient size in the country which ought to have a teacher of cookery, who would instruct older girls sent to a common centre assembled from various schools. The bread doles would furnish the necessary capital to start the village centres, and the full value of the food cooked might be given as a charity to the present recipients of the dry bread. For example, the returns already noted show that upwards of

raneous improvement in the sentiments, habits, and intelligence of a large part of the population. This change can only be wrought by bold and decided measures of social and economical reform. After the experience which culminated before 1834, if this country shrinks from grappling with the question of pauperism and its remedies—if the active part of the community be too devoted to short-sighted mercenary objects, or party strifes, to attend to this question—England will in this matter verify the satirical comparison which likens her to 'a mole, a creature blind and busy, continually working underground.'

100*l.* 16*s.* 9*d.* is given away in Kenilworth, chiefly, if not wholly, in bread. This amount would go largely to support a school, which would be further aided by the fees paid by the learners of all ages. The adult poor might be taught as well as the children, and many a young lady in Kenilworth might be able to get a practical knowledge of cookery that would be useful all her life. Again, at the adjacent picturesque old town of Coventry, where there is an admirable germ of a domestic economy school in the Blue Coat School for girls, and doles amounting to 415*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*, a school of cookery with branches might be established to the great comfort of its 40,000 inhabitants. It might fairly be predicted that the old crone who now hobbles to church to get a sixpenny or ninepenny loaf would be much more cheered by a giblet pie or a shepherd's pie, or some fried frisket of meat, or sausages rolls of Australian mincemeat, or a quart of Irish stew, or some curried tripe, or a Cornish pasty, or a pig's fry, which is called "poor man's goose," or a quart of "pot-au-feu," or "a mackerel or herring baked with bread crumbs and herbs," or a plum pudding at Christmas. Any one of these could be provided for the cost of a ninepenny loaf, and some for a sixpenny one, as we learn from the recipes of the National Training School for Cookery.

'If Lord Sandon would look into this subject he would find that there is a fund exceeding 110,000*l.* per annum throughout England and Wales now devoted to doles, which might help to promote good cookery among the poor and help to compete with habits of drunkenness. But competent teachers of cookery must be trained, and this is the first task to be accomplished, with or without the application of ancient doles to cookery, and ought to be looked to as a national work.'

SECTION VIII.

SELF-HELP AND VOLUNTARY RELIEF.

SUCH are the steps, and such the remedial measures accompanying them, which are suggested for the ultimate abolition of compulsory relief, that manifold 'curse' to the country, both in a social and economic point of view, as the preceding pages, harmonizing with the expressed sentiments of some of our highest authorities on the subject, have attempted to show. The abolition, thus effected, would, it is hoped, give no rude shock to our social order or to traditional sentiments and habits. An encouraging precedent is furnished by the change which in 1834 was effected, without difficulty, from the most threatening excesses of the old Poor Law system to the improved regulations of the new system. In the course of a certain number of years, giving full notice of the impending change, the wages-earning population will have been weaned from their baneful dependence on extraneous aid; 'educated,' in both senses of the word, to rely on their own industry and thrift for provision against those 'distresses of body and estate' to which all mankind are liable, and from some of which no man can hope to be exempted.

Among these physical evils destitution is one which seldom arises from other than easily preventible causes.[1] It seldom happens that a man able and willing to work is placed in such circumstances as prevent him from finding employment. The intelligent author of the 'Original,' who had much experience in dealing with pauperism, goes so far as to say that 'whatever destitution there may be from want of employment may be traced to removable causes.' Nor is the percentage high of persons who, before they approach old age, are permanently disabled either by natural infirmity or by accident. The relief, therefore, of all such persons may with confidence be left, as it is left in other countries, to the charity of relations, friends, neighbours, or the public. There are, indeed, people who think so meanly of the benevolent forces at work in society as to question the ground of such confidence, but who in so thinking seem to arraign the natural and Providential order of things. Such thinkers may be left to argue their point with those who, like Professor Fawcett, contend in favour of compulsory relief on the ground that benevolence is lavish, and is extended to the deserving and undeserving alike. And truly it appears from the Report on Foreign Poor Laws that in Belgium and at Rome so much is actually dispensed

[1] 'Wherever inquiries have been made as to the previous condition of the able-bodied individuals who live in such numbers upon the town-parishes, it has been found that the pauperism of the greater number has originated in indolence, vice, or improvidence, and might have been avoided by ordinary industry and care. The smaller number consisted of cases where the cause of pauperism could not be ascertained, rather than of cases where it was apparent that destitution had arisen from blameless want.'—*Report of Commissioners for* 1834.

in alms as to foster idleness and improvidence in a population. If, then, benevolence be liable to the faults of indiscriminateness and excess, it will at any rate be equal to the relief of all the destitution which could not have been prevented by the exercise of ordinary industry and prudence. Where destitution is not due to gross and persistent misconduct, the relief of it may be confidently trusted to the common feelings of humanity, especially when these feelings are reinforced by the motives of religious charity. 'Where cases of real hardship occur,' say the Poor Law Commissioners in their Report of 1834, 'the remedy must be applied by individual charity, a virtue for which no system of compulsory charity can or ought to be a substitute.' 'If there were no poor-rates,' says Mr. Walker in his 'Original,' 'but more prudence, and wages were sufficiently high to bring up decently the average number of children, allowing for the ordinary casualties, then, when there were more than the average number of children or extraordinary casualties, the resources would be a certain degree of privation, and, beyond that, the voluntary assistance of those around.' Those who by the recklessness of their course have 'omitted' the favourable 'tide' which is offered to every man during his life, and have thus got into 'shallows and miseries,' will, if left to the natural working of things, be powerfully stimulated to extricate themselves from their distressful position; and, if they are capable of learning from experience, will be taught to avoid by due heedfulness a repetition of their discomforts, the example of which will meantime have acted as a deterrent to others from abandoning themselves to similar

courses. Hence, as facts before-mentioned show,[1] there will be no *more* cases of starvation in the absence of compulsory relief laws than actually occur amongst us under such laws.

The real inadequacy of the compulsory relief system is shown by the fact that it fails at the moment when there is the greatest need. In such an emergency it breaks down as regards both in-maintenance and out-door relief. A sufficient amount of workhouse accommodation obviously cannot be provided to meet every extraordinary pressure of pauperism. Mr. Longley, in his Report for 1874-5 to the Local Government Board, mentions the failure of the in-door maintenance system in London, when the financial distresses of the year 1866 threw a multitude of applicants upon the parish. Out-door relief was found equally incommensurate with the exigencies of the Lancashire Cotton Famine in 1863. On that occasion rates were raised so high, that they could not be raised higher without ruin to the ratepayers, and no more aid for destitute hand-workers could be obtained from that source. Hence it was found necessary to appeal with lamentable accounts of starving artizans and their families to the charity of the whole kingdom. The national bounty poured in to an amount which was not only sufficient, but abundant; for, when the pressure of the famine had been relieved by it, a considerable surplus remained in the hands of the distributors. Upon this fact it may in passing be observed that, had there been no Poor Laws on which the hand-workers in question could place an anticipatory reliance in case of distress,

[1] Page 173.

there would unquestionably have been far less of distress to relieve, no more of it than charity would have been amply competent to relieve. The preceding years had been years of much prosperity in the cotton industry, and wages had been high; but they were spent in the usual style of self-indulgence, so that the earners were left unprovided against a day of necessity.[1] We may judge, too, from this instance that charity comes out strongest when the need is greatest, and that its resources are equal to any demand that may be made upon them. However, it is certain that, notwithstanding Poor Law relief, recourse was here necessarily had to charity; and the failure of compulsory relief was conspicuous when its real efficiency was put to the test. It may well be believed that the voluntary relief, given on the occasion of this Lancashire calamity, was received by the distressed with a gratitude towards their more prosperous fellow-countrymen, which no amount of compulsory relief could have kindled.

All experience shows that charity, influenced by religion, may be trusted for the relief of distress. There are, for instance, very few Jewish paupers, because their co-religionists, in obedience to precepts of benevolence, common alike to the Law and the Gospel, regularly assist the indigent members of their own community. The practice, as I am informed, among the Jews in this matter is to apply the alms of the congregation to the relief of its distressed members, and

[1] On the subject of this 'Cotton Famine,' and the previous extravagance in dealing with high wages, much interesting light is thrown by the letters in the second volume of the 'Life of the late Mr. Charles Kingsley.'

where those members are capable of earning a subsistence, to such relief as may assist them in following their respective callings; in short, 'to helping them to help themselves;' and it is said to be the custom with those who have prospered after receiving this relief to pay back its cost to the fund of the congregation.

Among the heathens, the Parsees are conspicuous for liberality of alms to such of their co-religionists as fall into want. It is well known that obedience is very generally paid by Mahometans to the precepts of their religion which enforce the duty of succouring the distressed of their own persuasion, and which prescribe the devotion of a tenth of income to that purpose. Among Christian communities it is notorious that the Society of Friends provide for their members in distress, and that therefore there are no pauper Quakers. The liberality of almsgiving among members of the Romish community needs but to be mentioned. In some places this liberality seems only to be too great, so as to encourage mendicancy; but in others their 'organization of charity' is worthy of all praise. Thus in a letter of Dr. Arnold's, published in his 'Life' by Dean Stanley, is a description of one of these charities. It is at Padua: 'The influence of the clergy must be great there and most beneficially exercised; for a large institution for the poor at Padua, providing for those who are out of work, as well as for the old and infirm, derives its main support from legacies, the clergy never failing to urge every man who can at all afford it to leave something at his death for this object.'[1] Such is the efficacy of charity, prompted by religious motives. And in Eng-

[1] 'Life of Arnold,' p. 212.

land why has not this charity its full efficacy, but that by a system of law, which undertakes to relieve the distressed by means of forced contributions, its heart is chilled and its hand is narrowed? Where want is the result of mere idleness, the Apostolic remedy is simple: 'If a man will not work, neither shall he eat;' and the man who has been left to try this remedy will assuredly be cured of the disease! But this kind of disease will never be cured while there are laws which propagate it. On the other hand, charity, including that charity which begins at home, may, if there be no laws to supersede its exercise, be safely trusted to relieve and aid all unavoidable distress. Even concurrently with the Poor Law, the manifold operations of charity are continued, and, it may be added, overlapping in a multitude of cases the administration of that law, and mutually being overlapped by it, unfortunately assist in pauperizing the masses,[1] as those persons are aware who have set on foot the 'organization of charity' in London, and who have therefore wisely put themselves into communication with the Poor Law authorities, in order to obviate the waste of charitable means. Nay, under the old Poor Law, the Inquiry Commissioners of 1832 could observe in their Report that 'private and uncompulsory charity is so deeply implanted by Providence in human nature, that even the existing system has rather misdirected than destroyed it.' We may therefore judge

[1] The reader who wishes to form an adequate notion of the extent and effects of private charity in the East End of London, is referred to the 'Remains of the late benevolent and intelligent Mr. Edward Denison,' and to the remarkable letter of the Rev. W. Stone, formerly Rector of Whitechapel, which will be found in the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners Report for 1834.

how effectually it would operate if the relief of real distress were left wholly to its agency. Even now, as Dr. Hawkesley has shown, the amount annually given in charity in London alone is not less than 5,000,000*l.*[1] The amount of the revenues of endowed charities in England for simply feeding, lodging, and giving pecuniary and medical aid to poor and indigent persons, reaches, according to a recent Parliamentary return, the sum of 1,750,000*l.* Thus abundant are the uncompelled resources for the relief of the needy! Are English people ready to send succour for suffering over the wide world, as, for example, to the French, after the siege of Paris and the devastations of the Prussian war; to India, in the famine of 1874, and more recently in 1877; to Persia, in the enormous sufferings of a like kind in 1872; to Turkish widows and orphans, plunged into destitution by a barbarous warfare, and driven in crowds from their homes, naked and starving, to the shelter of a fortified city; and is it to be supposed that the same English people would, if the succour of the destitute at home in their own country were left to their charity, close heart and hand at the sight of distress—that they would be charitable to people of other lands, and churlish to their own fellow-countrymen? But when law takes the relief of their neighbours and kinsfolk out of people's hands, and compels them to contribute to their relief, it is not in human nature to reclaim that relief; nor indeed, as we have seen, is it always expedient to interfere with the working of legal relief by the collateral action of private bounty. But in pro-

[1] Fawcett's 'Manual of Political Economy,' p. 565. By some other authorities the amount has been put down at 7,000,000*l.*

portion as legal relief supersedes, as it must supersede, the exercise of charity, the latter, irrepressible, finds vent in the relief of suffering in all other distressed parts of the world. It has, indeed, been apprehended that the operations of private charity at home would be so extensive as to be even detrimental to the recipients and to the public. There is, however, good reason for expecting that this superabundant beneficence, if the relief of national distress were left wholly to its operations, would soon cure itself, and that experience would lead to the wiser direction of its copious streams, and to their retrenchment within due and prudent bounds.

Of the superiority of voluntary over compulsory relief, in the effects on the minds both of givers and receivers, there can be no question. The free-will giving of relief not only expresses, but strengthens the givers' sympathetic interest in the welfare of the recipients, who, in their turn, feel a gratefulness which they cannot feel for help which could not have been withheld from them. Thus voluntary beneficence establishes a relation of good will between the parties, to the benefit of both. But compulsory relief, as it is received without gratefulness, so is given without benevolence.

It has been objected that by the limitation of poor-relief to free-will action an undue strain would be exerted on the resources of the more benevolent members of the community. If, however, as is here contended, and as the great masters of political economy unanimously argue, nay, and as abundant fact seems to prove, destitution is aggravated by a system of com-

pulsory relief, it is reasonable to expect that through the abolition of such a system the amount of destitution to be relieved would proportionably decrease. Nor should it be forgotten that, were the relief of distress left to the exertions of the benevolent, the previously latent benevolence of thousands would be called forth into active operation.[1] People's liberality will be more on the alert when, in particular cases coming under their own notice, they feel that the prevention of starvation depends on their own individual action. From these considerations it would appear that, in ordinary times, no serious addition would accrue to the calls which are now made on benevolent persons by the joint claims of compulsory and charitable relief.

In extraordinary emergencies it seems to be generally admitted that compulsory relief altogether breaks down. Such, as we saw, was the case in the Lancashire cotton-famine. That calamity, having been greatly aggravated by the previous extravagance encouraged by reliance upon Poor Law relief, rendered necessary a recourse to the charity of the whole kingdom, which ungrudgingly poured in its hundreds of thousands of pounds to the timely and effectual relief of the distressed population.

But with regard to the position in which the benevolent would be placed, were the relief of destitution thrown upon them, no concern need be felt on their account. They may be trusted to bear their burden

[1] Even in present circumstances we learn that 'the Charity Organization Society in London has been the means of eliciting charitable exertions and charitable gifts to a very remarkable degree.' —*Times*, March 19, 1877.

with cheerfulness, for cheerfulness is of the very essence of benevolence. Though it might fall somewhat heavily at first on individuals among them, the burden would soon be lightened by the probable increase in the number of those who would aid to bear it, and the probable decrease of the distress which causes it.

How voluntary relief may supersede compulsory relief is seen in the 'Report on Foreign Poor Laws,' which was communicated in 1875 to our Local Government Board, and to which reference has already been made. Take the instance of France, where relief is dispensed by voluntary associations, called 'bureaux de bienfaisance' and 'bureaux de charité,' the difference between which it is not necessary here to explain, but which administer funds derived from old endowments and charitable collections, supplemented by 'optional and incidental' subsidies from local authorities, and sometimes from the central Government. These voluntary associations are managed by elected and unpaid committees, subject to the inspection of public authority. They are not, indeed, universal, but extend to two-thirds of the departments of France. The relief which they administer is wholly voluntary; even the aid which the State gives towards their funds, and which, exclusive of Paris, amounts to about one-sixth of their income, is given as a matter of charity, not of legal obligation. We quote the Report on this point: 'The State takes its share of voluntary charity, either by means of local subsidies, or by special grants of public money.' Establishments for out-door and in-door relief may be founded at the discretion of local authorities, subject to the approval of the Minister

of the Interior. There are also hospitals and almshouses in various places, supported by voluntary contributions. Such is a brief account of the efficient organization of charity in France. In that country poor-rates are unknown, and no one can claim relief as a matter of legal right. Vagrant mendicity at the same time is restrained in France by law, particularly by the institution of 'maisons de détention,' houses of detention, half prisons, half workhouses, to which vagrant mendicants, on being taken up, are consigned for periods not less than one week, and in which they are put to hard work during their stay. In certain cases of disablement, permissions to beg are granted by the authorities, which the mendicant is bound to show, when required by the person whose alms he asks. The present writer can state that during a residence of about a year and a quarter in a provincial town in that country, he met with but one instance of a beggar, and he on demand immediately showed his 'permission.' The writer will add, with regard to intemperance in that country, a subject closely allied with pauperism, that he witnessed but one or two instances of such excess.

In Belgium, according to Mr. Doyle,[1] the editor of the Report on Foreign Poor Laws, there is, properly speaking, no poor-rate, the burden of supporting the destitute being 'thrown upon private charity, stimulated, husbanded, and regulated by the State.' No pauper has a formal right to relief. 'In most communes sufficient funds for the support of the poor are provided by the proceeds of former endowments, aided

[1] Introduction to the 'Reports on Poor Laws in Foreign Countries,' pp. 58–60.

by a constant flow of donations and bequests.' These funds are administered by boards of unpaid functionaries. In this country it appears that pauperism is fostered by an 'excessive amount of assistance and alms provided by public and private charity,' a fact which goes to prove that this resource is at any rate *sufficient* for the relief of at least honest distress.

In Holland, we gather from the Report on Poor Laws in that country, recently published by Mr. Sendal, one of the Local Government Board Inspectors, that the Dutch make the relief of destitution depend 'on the issue of a conflict between the selfish and the unselfish forces in society.' 'There it is held that no pauper has a right to relief, and that the exercise of charity is not a function of the State.' 'When voluntary bodies or religious organizations fail to relieve, the civil commune may, though it is nowhere ordained that it must, do so. The Government leave it free to act according to discretion, subject only to "a sense of responsibility as to the consequences."' Why, it may be well asked, should not our Boards of Guardians also be trusted with a similar discretion, and with an exclusive authority in the whole matter of relief?

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, a dependency of the Crown of Holland, 'seems,' says the Report on Foreign Poor Laws, 'to have next to no revenue for the poor; yet no complaints of dearth and distress ever come from that quarter.'[1] In this country, then, it appears that voluntary alms suffice for the relief of distress.

'In Italy,' Mr. Doyle states, in his Introduction to

[1] P. 211; see also p. 207.

the Report, 'speaking generally, there is no legal provision for the relief of the poor, and no special tax is levied for the purpose; and, as there is no obligation on the part of local bodies to support destitute persons, the place of birth or domicile of individual paupers is not bound to pay the expenses of their relief elsewhere. There is consequently no law of settlement.'

Customs with regard to the relief of the destitute vary in Italy with the very heterogeneous provinces of which the Italian kingdom is composed; but it may be said generally of that kingdom that large charitable foundations, and a constantly flowing stream of private alms, constitute the provision made for the relief of the distressed. The expenditure of private alms at Rome has been so profuse as to greatly stimulate pauperism, just as is the case in the East End of London. 'Rome,' says the Report, 'always pre-eminent in lavish almsgiving, has been always distinguished for the wide diffusion of its squalid indigence, the magnitude of its many-sided mendicity.' This lavish almsgiving at Rome, be it observed in passing, is another instance, besides the fact just now quoted in reference to Belgium, of the sufficiency of charity for the relief of, at least, blameless destitution; and goes to prove that 'starvation' is no *more* likely to happen where there is no compulsory poor relief than it actually happens under such relief in England. The evils, however, of 'squalid indigence and many-sided mendicity,' caused by a too liberal distribution of alms at Rome, were being remedied under the wise regulations of the Italian Government, which had already effected a retrenchment in this expenditure to the extent of about 20,000 francs =

800*l.* per month. But the province of Bologna in that kingdom is a most striking instance of the success of a liberal but not unwise distribution of voluntary, including endowed, relief. In that province, out of a population numbering 407,452, the number of persons relieved in one year was only 8,954, or a little more than two per cent.; was, in fact, $2\frac{20889}{101363}$ per cent. of the inhabitants. It may here be observed that when mention is made of the mere *percentage* of persons relieved in this and in other continental countries in the course of a year, it is not to be supposed that the average *amount* of relief given to each recipient at all approaches the average amount given to each pauper in England in the same time, inclusive of the cost of inmaintenance. It is stated that in France, for instance, the average amount of relief given per head is not more than 10*s.* per annum. In truth, the percentage of recipients of relief in a year is no sufficient standard of a comparison between the pauperism of England and the pauperism of continental countries.

In Bavaria[1] poor relief is a matter, in by far the greater proportion, of highly-organized voluntary charity —there is a jealous competition between two widely-ramified voluntary associations in the matter of relief— and the compulsory relief of proved destitution is available only when its relief cannot be obtained from relatives or other voluntary sources, such as the two associations above-mentioned. Legal provision, though in a certain degree obligatory on the civil authorities, is at the same time only subsidiary; and 'the poor

[1] Pp. 376 et seq., 'Report on Bavaria.'

have no right to prefer a claim at law before a judicial authority for public relief.'

In the rest of Germany, the methods of relief are too diverse to be easily capable of reduction under any one general category; but it may be said that in by far the greater part of that country a highly organized voluntary relief is the general rule. For accounts of this organization in Germany the reader is referred to the Report on Poor Laws in Foreign Countries, especially to the description of poor management by an extensive voluntary agency and sub-division of districts in Hamburg, Leipsic, and above all, Elberfeld, in the province of Dusseldorf. Of the efficient machinery for relief at this last-mentioned place a full account, from the pen of a distinguished expert in charity organization, will be found at a later page of this work.[1] The general idea of poor-relief in Germany is that of voluntary alms administered by numerous unpaid functionaries, and supplemented, when the funds fall short, by local public bodies from the proceeds of local taxation. In short, organized private charity, subsidized upon occasion from public funds, is a general description of poor-relief in the States of Germany. It may be added that in these, as in other Continental States, great stress is effectually laid on the duty of relatives in the succour of persons who have fallen into a state of destitution.

In Russia 'no taxes are levied for the relief of the poor.'[2] In this country organized charity, both endowed and private, with some subsidies from the State and

[1] Page 273.

[2] 'Introduction to Report,' p. 37.

from municipal bodies, is the general rule. 'The Russians,' says Mr. Mackenzie Wallace in his exhaustive book on that country, 'have little or no practical acquaintance with pauperism.'[1] In Odessa, the relief[2] of the destitute is almost entirely left, and apparently with much success, to the operations of private beneficence.

Bucharest, the capital of Wallachia, is a signal instance of the good consequences of leaving the succour of the destitute to private charity. So we may judge from the state of things described in the following extract from the Report. 'No doubt in Bucharest there are numerous persons who, in comparison with their neighbours, are badly off; but there is none of that squalid misery which is to be met with in the cities of Western Europe. In confirmation of this it may be mentioned that a charitable society of ladies, established a year ago by the Princess, and of which the meetings are held under the presidency of her Highness, has had the unusual difficulty to contend with of not finding objects on which to expend its funds. The ladies of the society undertook to ascertain personally the condition of the applicants, and in most instances discovered that they were not of a class coming within the object of the society, that of relieving pressing distress; their houses being comfortable and sometimes with the luxury of a piano. . . . The hospitals of Bucharest are numerous, and I have the authority of more than one English medical man, who has assisted them, for stating that they bear a favourable comparison with the principal

[1] Vol. I. p. 217. [2] Report, pp. 480–1.

hospitals of the Continent. The relief afforded is invariably gratuitous.'

Such is a brief and necessarily, from the complexity of the subject, imperfect account of the manner in which uncompulsory charity operates in the principal States of the Continent of Europe. In these countries there appears to be no more of destitution,[1] no less of industry, while there is certainly more of thrift and self-restraint, than in our own population. No reason can be assigned why the compulsory method is more necessary for England than for other countries.

In comparing the two different methods, the compulsory and the voluntary, as exhibited respectively in this country and on the Continent, it may be urged that they come after all to the same thing, the relief of actual destitution. This may be granted; but it must be remembered that the compulsory method has a far greater effect in *creating* destitution and in demoralizing a population. Where relief is compulsory it can be reckoned upon as a certainty, and thus offers a direct premium to improvidence; where it is voluntary it can be looked to only as a possibility, and therefore leaves the more occasion for provident action and self-restraint. A less loss of manly feeling and honourable self-respect attaches to the reception of voluntary relief than to the reception of relief which is exacted on no just plea of moral right. Further, compulsory relief is contributed as a matter of course, often with grudging; where relief is voluntary, it is the exercise of a virtuous quality of

[1] It was stated in a former page, on the authority of Professor Fawcett, that as many persons in proportion to population die of starvation in London as in Paris or Berlin.

humanity. On the other hand, compulsory relief is often received under a false impression of right, and with discontent at the amount doled out; voluntary relief is received with gratitude, or at least with some sense of obligation, often prompting the wish at least to make a requital. Compulsory relief tends to the impoverishment of multitudes of the payers of it; but there is no fear lest voluntary relief should exceed the proportion of the means of the givers. Again, where compulsory relief is in force, there will be voluntary relief still going on at the same time; as for instance in London, where, according to authentic testimony, five millions of pounds are annually expended in charity: and the two kinds of relief by their independent action, often interfering with each other, and raising the amount of each other, must tend to increase pauperism by increasing its resources, and must involve the unproductive consumption of an undue quantity of the capital, the wages-fund, of the country. Moreover, compulsory relief must in its administration be much more liable to abuse and extravagance than the opposite kind; for if persons are unfortunately careless in regard to the beneficial disbursement of their own money for the relief of distress, they will be more careless in regard to the beneficial disbursement of public funds for the same purpose. Moreover, as the whole of our Poor Law history shows, compulsory relief tends to establish a large mass of pauperism as an 'institution' in a country, whereas under voluntary relief there is always greater possibility and hope of the diminution of its amount. Hence, altogether, the voluntary method seems far more consistent with the material,

moral, and social welfare of the recipients and of the contributors also, as well as with public economy, than the compulsory method, although both methods may 'come to the same thing' in the relief of actual and present destitution.

Voluntary charity may take the form either of organized aid, or of aid given by individuals to persons known to the donors. The question suggests itself, which of these two is preferable in lieu of compulsory relief? And the decision of this question would probably depend upon the nature of the locality in which voluntary charity is to be exercised. In large cities, London especially, numbers form an obstacle almost insuperable to the due efficacy of individual charity in relieving the honestly distressed;[1] but in small towns

[1] Of the beneficial capabilities of organized charity some notion may be gathered from the two following accounts, relating to Elberfeld in Prussia, and to London respectively:—

'ELBERFELD POOR RELIEF SYSTEM.—Of the many people who have lately talked about the relief system at Elberfeld, I think I may safely say that few have gone out of their way to see the place. The guide-books say next to nothing about it, and it is passed without a thought by tourists from Cologne, bent on visiting the stalactites at Iserlohn, or hurrying from Cassell to Düsseldorf. Yet at Elberfeld is seen at this moment, working on a large scale, a system which is destined—perhaps at no distant period—to sweep away our Poor Law, and revolutionise the officialism and withering routine which have so long checked and poisoned English philanthropy. With memories fresh from Marylebone back streets, I determined to have a good walk about Elberfeld. I stopped on the bridge to look at the rushing Wupper, the rapid, singing boundary which separates Westphalia from the Rhineland. As it flows through the city, every few hundred yards of the river seems to be utilised for tanneries and silk-washing, and the sound of waterfalls is, at first, rather deafening. The rapidity of the stream swiftly carries off all impurities, and leaves a general Alpine flavour behind it. In the crowds hurrying to and fro, I remarked that everyone seemed bent on work; I was the only lounger. I need

and country villages it would apparently be preferable on more than one account, especially as it would fall in

not say that I met no beggar; I did not even meet an ill-dressed or really dirty person. Some of the houses by the river are very poor, and I peeped into several; but there were few smells, save of tan or silk (bad enough, but clean dirt), and everything seemed washed—streets, walls, rocky ascent and descent of steps. No doubt the Wupper must get some credit for this; but how many people have water and still don't use it? The habitual surface of whitewash on all the house-walls, with the beams picked out in a network of black, gives the place a bright and newly-painted look. The public buildings are handsome, the open spaces well cared for, the markets numerous and thronged by cheerful and well-to-do people. Such were my *impressions de voyage*. I next made my way to the Hotel de Ville, and hunted up the clerks and secretaries of the "Armenverwaltung" or "Poor Relief." I was rather surprised to find that not one of them could speak anything but German. In short, the officials are part of Elberfeld, and deal with Elberfeld alone. One of these gentlemen said to me, "All engaged in this relief system look upon the work as one in which the honour of the town is involved." And the paid secretaries, of which there are six, are imbued with the same spirit. Briefly, what is the Elberfeld system? It is a plan whereby the citizens of a town charge themselves voluntarily with the supervision and general care of their needy neighbours. There is no Poor Law and no workhouse; the money required is contributed by the citizens and distributed by them. In 1854, paupers in a population of 50,364 having reached the enormous figure of 4,224, or about 1 in 12, Herr Von der Heydt was permitted by the Municipality to divide the town into eighteen districts—a voluntary overseer for each—each district subdivided into fourteen sections—a male visitor to each section, restricted to four families—families visited and visitors report to overseer at least once a fortnight—overseers themselves to report to Poor Commissioners, and receive moneys for out-door relief. The utmost pressure is brought to bear upon everyone to work, and upon relations to support each other. There is little drunkenness, but some improvidence, and a good deal of desertion of families. The law visits these cases with cumulative punishment, and detention in work-reformatories to the extent of two years. There are good hospitals and ample medical attendance for each district. The aged and infirm are kept at their own homes by out-door relief, the careful but adequate administration of which, combined with the absence of a

more readily with English habits of action, which incline rather to individualism than to co-operation.

legal refuge, is not found to work prejudicially, as in England. The tabulation of cases is as accurate and exhaustive as that of our Charity Organization Society; but, as a great relief society, and the only one, the Elberfeld system covers, and covers well, the ground left almost unoccupied by the Charity Organization Society, and inadequately occupied by the poor-rate and private benevolence. Admirable is the closeness and continuity of relation between the rich and the poor at Elberfeld. The names and addresses of the 300 visitors are printed and published, with the numbers of the houses for which they are responsible. Anyone can at once apply to his own visitor, who is bound immediately to go down, and empowered without a report or vote to relieve *at once* where urgent. The case is sure to be well reported and sifted in committee afterwards. A glance at the list of visitors reveals the homely nature of the visitation—Uneld, lithographer, North Street, from 5 to 47. Klarenbach, shopman, &c.; T. Beuer, schoolmaster. Tailors, shoemakers, lawyers, and other professional men, all help. This is the old, but it is the true form of charity—thorough, personal, wise; seeking constantly, whilst helping the distressed, to diminish and destroy pauperism. And with what results? In 1853, the year before the new system began, at Elberfeld, population, 50,364; paupers, 4,224. In 1865, population, 63,686; paupers, 1,289. In 1876, with an increase in population of 40,000, the pauper list had sunk from 4,224 to a little over 1,200 in the year. Let it now be remembered that the action of our Charity Organization Society, as far as it goes, is identical in principle with that at Elberfeld. If its results are less showy, it is because it is still hampered with the Poor Law and the freaks of private benevolence, and insufficiently supported by the hearts and hands of a less intelligent public. But, sooner or later, our Poor Law, denounced as early as 1819 by Sydney Smith, must go, and the nucleus of a sounder system will then be found in the enlargement and fulfilment of the Charity Organization Society. At present everyone has, when destitute, a legal right to support. The country is taxed accordingly, and the alms are officially administered. The sundry evils of such a system—wages lowered, improvidence encouraged, gluttony and drunkenness fostered, hypocrisy practised, discontent, degradation, and pauperism engendered—all these have been ably exposed again and again, and they are such that no partial reform, no external and parallel action of the Charity Organization Society with the present Poor Law can

Thus a person in possession of surplus means would, in proportion to their extent, dispense his charities to

possibly do more than mitigate the acknowledged mischief. At present the public are fined at both ends, first in poor-rates, secondly in private alms, and the private alms too often go to assist the poverty and misery created by the administration of the poor-rate. A similar state of things prevailed at Elberfeld in 1853. That was stopped by Von der Heydt, but it was only stopped by sweeping away the old system of almshouses, public and private charities, &c., and planting the new. The seeds of that new, and yet old, system—for it is the Apostolical one, after all—are in our midst, and are bearing good fruit; but why cannot we thoroughly adopt the Elberfeld plan? I would have the poor of every city and town in England dealt with by a local rate self-imposed, and the moneys distributed by the citizens on the Elberfeld system. Why cannot this be done in London? The answer to this is the answer of Cologne to Elberfeld, It will not work on so large a scale. My reply is, Anything sound in principle will work on a large scale with the right organization; and in London you can find organization for anything worth organizing. Other German towns have adopted the Elberfeld system—Grefeldt with 70,000, Barmen with 85,000 people—and what can be done for 85,000 people can be done for a million. The cry is that enough workers could not be found. Even the Charity Organization is hard up for free workers. My reply is, People distrust what looks like a half measure, or tinkering up the old system; but, once let the Poor Law vanish, and the Charity Organization be entrusted with adequate funds, the public mind would be roused with the lifting of this incubus, and London would rise—shall I say, almost with a blush, to the level of Elberfeld? If 300 workers carry on the poor relief of a town of 80,000, shall there not be found in London the 11,250 workers to carry out the same organization for its three millions? The time has at length come to abolish, gradually if you will, but still to abolish, a poor-relief system which has not succeeded and cannot be reformed; and to put in its place one which, whatever modification it may require, has succeeded, and is bound in time to triumph over the blunders and anomalies of poor relief in the past.

'H. R. HAWEIS.'

—*Echo*, Sept. 29, 1876.

'OUTDOOR RELIEF.—At the usual weekly meeting of the Council of the Charity Organization Society, held at its rooms, Buckingham Street, Strand, the restrictions on out-door relief formed the subject of

a greater or smaller number of distressed persons, with whose circumstances he would be acquainted. He

a long and animated discussion. The chair was taken by Mr. Alsager Hay Hill, and among those present were Sir Charles Trevelyan, Sir R. M. Stephenson, Lord Sudley, Captain Fortescue, Lady Wilson, Miss Octavia Hill, &c. Major Fitzroy, the representative of St. George's, Hanover-square, in introducing the subject, said the real question the Council had to determine was how they were to deal with the consequences of the improvident habits when the Guardians were withdrawing out-relief and the people had made no provision to meet the effects of its withdrawal. If the details of such cases came before benevolent peoples, they would give their money liberally, though often thoughtlessly and wrongly. The present was the occasion for the society to act, for it was its special duty to combine forethought with charity, to guide private charity in the right direction. He would propose no plan, but would mention that the Committee of St. George's, Hanover Square, had thirty persons on a pension list. A strict investigation was instituted before any name was placed on the list, and it was necessary to show that no relations were able to assist, that the applicant had not been foolishly improvident or worthless, and that it would not be more just to let the Poor Law, rather than charity, support the applicant. There was no pension fund, but the support of each case was intrusted to one or more individuals. Sir Charles Trevelyan said it was hopeless to expect provident habit from the labouring classes so long as out-door relief was continued for such relief was a direct discouragement to thrift. It was a penalty to the thrifty, for, having accumulated insufficient savings for their old age, they were not entitled to any supplementary assistance. It was a bonus to the drunken and thriftless, for they were entitled by it to relief which they did not deserve. It was, in fact, a monstrous public evil, and if the Guardians were realizing this, the society would do its best to co-operate with them. If the society exercised properly its functions of inquiry and reporting, it would discover many deserving cases, in which aged and infirm people had been industrious, and, owing to misfortunes, had failed to provide for old age; these were the proper cases for organized charity. In the result, the Council unanimously adopted the following resolution:—"That, as it appears that many cases of individual hardship are occurring, especially among the respectable aged poor, in consequence of the laudable efforts of Boards of Guardians to do away with the much-abused system of out-door relief, it is the duty of this society, while cordially

would ascertain cases in which distress has been brought about by inevitable causes, such as fire or flood, sickness interrupting industry, the loss of savings through robbery or fraud. Such cases would give him a sufficient field for the exercise of all the bounty in his power. In fact, more of real good is even now done in this way than in any other way, as more nearly meeting the cases of the recipients, and as producing a reciprocity of good feeling on their part towards their benefactors. Individual charity, being more able to acquaint itself with the real circumstances of individual objects, can better discern not merely the persons to be helped, but the amount also and kind of aid best suited to their respective needs; aiming, if it be wisely directed, rather at giving substantial aid to the fewer number than frittering away its resources in the transient relief of the greater number; and, as far as possible, proposing to itself the great object of helping the distressed to help themselves, an object hardly within the competence of Poor Law administration. On the other hand, organized charity has a certain tendency to the undistinguishing and mechanical operation of legal relief; while, by its necessary publicity, it is more adverse to the honourable self-respect of its objects than is the private aid of the individual benefactor.

Doubtless, in the absence of legal relief, there would be a call on the more prosperous portion of the commu-

co-operating with the Guardians, to ascertain how private charity may best be directed to meet these isolated cases; and that with this view the Co-operation Sub-Committee be directed at once to ascertain, from metropolitan and other agencies for the relief of distress, whether some concerted plan of action cannot be devised."'—*Times*, Nov. 3, 1876.

nity to give increased attention to the condition of the less prosperous. At present they are encouraged to throw all this trouble on parochial authorities; and in truth, it is no less to the indolence and pride, as well as the timidity, of the rich, than to the natural wishes of the improvident and self-indulgent portion of the poorer class, that the Poor Law owes its continuance. But were no such system in existence, the more prosperous amongst us would be under the necessity of diverting an occasional hour or two from business or pleasure to the wants of the distressed, as guardians of the poor are in this country,[1] and as the numerous volunteer inspectors are on the Continent—at Elberfeld, Leipsic, and elsewhere; to say nothing of the unpaid managers of the 'bureaux de bienfaisance' and the 'bureaux de charité,' in France. But, by this increased attention to the circumstances of the distressed and destitute, the more prosperous would be consulting the public interest, and ultimately their own interest also. They would be doing much to fill up that chasm of alienation between classes, the widening of which is one of our social dangers. For it is upon a good understanding between classes, not upon a police force, that public safety in the last resort depends; and to establish such an understanding nothing would tend more powerfully than that practical interest on the part of

[1] Guardians in large towns give more time to the discharge of their duties than is perhaps generally known. The writer is informed by a Guardian of the Woolwich Union, for instance, that the Board sits one day in each week from eleven to five o'clock, and that members of Committees of the Board have to give to the business of the Union a still greater portion of their time, sometimes extending to four days in the week.

the more prosperous towards the less prosperous class, and that increased intercourse between the two classes, which may be expected to supervene upon the substitution of voluntary beneficence for a legal compulsion upon the former to supply the necessities, however incurred, of the latter portion of the community.

A demur to this expectation may be made by shrewd and cynical judges of human nature; but a larger-minded and more generous and hopeful view seems the sounder philosophy. A return, effected by the gradual methods of a considerate wisdom, from our factitious system to the natural order of common life, by which each man's temporal welfare is in his own hands, aided in case of calamity by the benevolent action of his more fortunate fellows, would, it is suggested, turn the hearts of the rich still more towards the needy, and the hearts of the needy towards the rich. A return to this order of things would give room for the freer play of human sympathies, over-passing the barriers of social demarcation to the common benefit of both classes. The aid, and more than the aid, which is now compelled, would be given with goodwill and received with gratitude, and the bonds of society be strengthened.

To one who has studied the history of English Poor Law it seems strange that many of our philanthropists and earnest friends of the wages-earning population should not be more alive to the impoverishing and demoralising, the really cruel effects, in the long run, of compulsory relief, which in great measure defeats all plans for the benefit of those classes. It is strange that they have not realised the fact that their multifarious efforts, while that system is in force, can only 'stop a few holes

in the sieve;' nay, that their efforts, combined with the operation of that system, have in many places the effect of increasing the bulk of pauperism by increasing its resources, and often even counteract the effects of an improved administration of the Poor Laws, and are also counteracted by the lax administration of those laws. Still stranger, that some of the 'friends' of those classes should still uphold a system which all the varied and disastrous experience of the last eighty years has shown to be fraught with mischief in creating wretchedness and encouraging vice. So far from depreciating the efforts of well-directed voluntary charity, we have asserted that these are the natural and appointed means for all that is practicable in relieving distress. But we will also assert that if the above reasoning and testimonies be correct, all the efforts of voluntary charity, while the system of legal relief coexists with it, will be upon the whole not merely vain in raising the material condition of the wages-earning classes, but often worse than vain, as feeding the mischief of pauperism. Even the efforts which are being made for improving the moral and religious condition of those classes must be powerfully contravened by the operation of laws which remove the great secondary deterrents from intemperance and immorality, and which encourage the neglect and violation of natural and social duties; as the work of missionaries in a heathen country is impeded by the scandalising influence which their 'civilized' compatriots often exert upon the native mind. The difficulty of raising the moral standard of a population must be greater in proportion as a traditional law prevails which tends to

lower it. There will be always too much vice in a nation without the help of laws to foster it. While our Poor Law remains, one prolific root of moral mischief remains, ever throwing up its noxious produce, to blast the hopes of improvement and check the growth of all wholesome sentiments. How to extirpate it is the problem not merely for politicians, but for philanthropists to solve; how to extinguish a system which proposes to abolish indigence by means which immeasurably increase it, and bring in a multitude of other and worse evils besides. Conversely, to apply to our time the remark of the Poor Law Enquiry Commissioners, 'One great advantage of any measure that shall remove or diminish the evils of the present system is that it will afford free scope to the operation of every instrument which may be employed for elevating the intellectual and moral condition of the poorer classes.'

If the above statements and arguments be correct, it is no dream of enthusiasm, but a conviction of sober sense, to believe that, could a man with the munificent zeal of a Peabody spend the united fortunes of the Grosvenors, the Gowers, the Rothschilds, all the wealth stored or represented in the Bank of England and in Lombard Street, in attempting to ameliorate the condition of the masses, and were he to pass all his days in the best-directed application of these means to this purpose, he would accomplish but an infinitesimal amount of the benefit which that man would accomplish who should bring the intelligence of the country to recognise the genuine philanthropy of a gradual abolition of the Poor Law system; a system which, interfering with the natural and providential order and

course of things in the constitution and government of human society, indefinitely increases the evil which it proposes to remedy, and depraves while it impoverishes those whom it was intended to benefit.

The first efforts at impressing this view, fortified though it be by the authority of the most masculine minds which have searched into the causes of national well-being, may be met with contradiction, or the still more adverse conspiracy of silence; but through earnest repetition such efforts must at length prevail in proportion to their wise and beneficent purport, and sound theory will sooner or later pass into practice.

To demonstrate the evils of the Poor Law in its economic aspects, and the consequent advantage to the community which might be expected from the abolition of that law, would offer a worthy field for the patriotic exertions and homely eloquence of a second Cobden.

The word 'progress' is much in vogue. Here, in the reduction of pauperism, is a direction which progress may beneficially take, and which indeed, from some signs of the times, it would appear already to be taking. Already a hopeful augury of an effective 'Anti-Poor Law' movement is given in the numerous Poor Law Conferences now annually held in different districts of the kingdom for the discussion of questions relating to the provisions, administration, and effects of this law. Important also in their similar significance are the following facts:—That one of the Parliamentary representatives of the wages-earning classes themselves has exhorted his compeers in industry 'to trust not to the Poor Law, but to themselves;' and has said, 'By all means make the people hate the Poor Law, but do

so not by declaiming against it, but by teaching them a manly independence;' that one of the principal spokesmen of the Agricultural Labourers' Union declared at one of its great meetings: 'The Poor Law is the great curse of this country;' and that at another of these meetings Professor Francis Newman came forward, and after describing pauperism as the 'maintenance of a large body of the community on public alms, and as a disease which ought not to continue in a healthy country,' proceeded to observe that 'some people thought the Poor Law a natural state of things, and one made out of compassion for the labourer. It was no such thing; it was made as a police provision.'[1] As a police provision! Truly the Poor Law—especially the disastrous Act of 1796, a veritable specimen of 'legislating in a panic,' nay in a double panic of dearth and revolution, and probably also the beginning of the evils, the 43rd Elizabeth—was dictated by notions of policy, not charity. The dangerous tendency of aggregated poverty has indeed been the primary cause of Poor Laws. They owe their immediate origin to the craft of statesmen and the fears of the community. They resemble the short-sighted expedient of buying off invaders, who yet will return with further demands. Established to meet temporary emergencies, they have proved a perpetual mischief in infringing upon the national wealth, pauperizing and demoralizing millions in every successive generation, creating a chronic state of discontent, and keeping up the mass of the 'dangerous class' in our large towns, especially in London.

[1] For these facts see Report of Labourers' Meeting at Exeter, in *Times* of Oct. 21, 1874; and at Wellington, in *Times* of Oct. 22, 1874.

These laws, it has been truly observed, are designed to 'afford a protection to realised wealth at the expense of much that is noble and humane,' in other words, with the effect of checking greatly the exercise of active sympathy and benevolence. They are a kind of insurance of private property and public peace, but an insurance which tends to the absorption of that property and to the ultimate disturbance of that peace. They are a notable instance of that propensity of legislators to stave off till succeeding times (*après moi le déluge*) the difficulties of their own times, and to leave it to posterity to cope with those difficulties in an aggravated form. Experience has proved that the Poor Laws are not a product of those true politics which are 'the science of the future.' It is to the same policy of fear which dictated these laws, and to the superinduced force of custom, that they owe their continuance.

The founders of our Poor Law, Elizabeth and her advisers, doubtless saw in the immediate circumstances of their times apparent grounds for their legislation. The effects of the sudden dissolution of the monasteries and other religious establishments, by which their myriads of inmates, dependents and almspeople were impoverished,[1] the comparatively unsettled state of society, and the vagrant habits of a great number of the people, seemed to render such legislation at the

[1] It is noteworthy that Acts of Parliament for many years after the dissolution of the monasteries are full of clauses directed against 'rogues and vagabonds,' 'idle' people, valiant beggars, 'sturdy beggars.' It is stated that in more recent times in Spain, after a similar measure had been carried out, brigandage was greatly increased, and that people in travelling were liable to be called upon to 'stand and deliver' by a number of ejected friars.

time expedient. But certainly the intention of their law, for 'setting the poor on work and relieving poor impotent folk,' was perverted in practice as time went on.

These legislators can hardly have anticipated that the aforesaid 'work' at the workhouse would soon come to an end, while the pay would continue, or that nearly all the 'impotent' would, through reliance on relief, be 'poor' also. Unwittingly they sowed the seed which, in the lapse of years, naturally grew and spread itself out into the mighty 'upas tree' of modern pauperism. The Act of 1796 may have been expedient, had it been a purely temporary measure to meet an unusual emergency. But the wholly different circumstances of the present day, that is to say, our advanced civilization and intelligence, our internal peace, and the abundant and well-paid employment of labour, to say nothing of an immense activity of benevolence, seem to leave no sufficient reasons, economic or political, for the existence of compulsory relief; nay, rather seem to give an opportunity for taking decided steps in the direction of its abolition. To return, however, to the signs of a growing aversion to Poor Law relief; it may be mentioned that at the Conference of the Agricultural Labourers' Union, held in May 1877, in London, the chairman actually addressed the assembled thousands as thus:—'One of the subjects which would come before the Conference would be the formation of a benefit society in sickness, and he advised them to support the society, and to keep themselves from the operation of the Poor Laws; and he pointed out that a man was as much a pauper when he received an order for medicine

and medical advice as when he received pauper food. He urged the labourers to adopt an honourable system of self-help, and so get rid of Poor Law relief.'[1]

If, then, the Poor Law relief be, as the above-mentioned champions of the Agricultural Labourers' Union thus boldly declare it to be, 'the great curse of the country,' a 'disease,' 'an unnatural state of things,' a thing from which wages-earners should 'keep themselves,' and which they should 'get rid of,' who can estimate the good which, other circumstances favouring, must, from its abolition, accrue to those very classes for whose supposed benefit it continues in operation? Surely it is one of the most melancholy exhibitions in the world, that of the wages-earning classes of England, with all their good and solid qualities, subjected to the poverty-creating and degrading influences of Poor Law administration. An encouraging example of the beneficial effect, if not of the abolition, yet of the 'minimization' of the system of compulsory relief, is furnished by the contemporary history of Poor Law and its reform in another country. In the 'Report on Foreign Poor Laws,'[2] we are informed that in 1845 a law was passed in Norway, 'giving to every person in case of destitution a legal claim to relief!' The effect of this law was such as might, from our own experience, have been expected. 'The burdens of the wealthier classes were increased, while the motives to self-dependence in the poor were weakened.' During fifteen years, while this law was in operation, pauperism increased one-third, and the expenditure was nearly doubled, although the

[1] Report in the *Times* of May 16, 1877.

[2] Page 23 of the 'Introduction to Report on Foreign Poor Laws.'

population had increased only one-fifth. The Government of Norway, however, sensible of these evil results of the law of 1845, totally changed the system by a fresh enactment in 1863. The 'right' to relief was restricted to orphans and persons of unsound mind. The relief even of the sick and aged ceased to be obligatory, and able-bodied men were to be relieved only upon the Commissioners being satisfied that the cases were of 'urgent necessity.' The consequences of this change of law in Norway were speedily apparent. In 1869, six years after the change was effected, 'pauperism was only about 180,000 out of a population of 1,720,500, or about 10½ to every thousand, while the whole expenditure was 250,700*l.*' A reformed Poor Law, which in six years produced an effect like this towards dispauperizing a population, is well entitled to the description given of it in the Report, of an 'improved system.'

The English Legislature also might on this subject follow the advice—'Sapere aude, incipe'—dare to be wise, begin, make the venture of an improved system. Other nations, not, we may believe, more courageous or wiser than our own, have dared to retrench within the narrowest limits a Poor Law system, or have kept themselves free from such systems. The French Revolutionary Assemblies, indeed, twice affirmed during a period of great distress the abstract principle of our Poor Laws, but they were contented with simply affirming it, nor has any subsequent legislature in that country seen fit to embody it in law.[1]

[1] The Assemblée Constituante, 1790, passed an 'Instruction' to this effect, and the Convention Nationale, 1793, in their 'Declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen,' made similar empty flourishes.

In Hindostan no Poor Law exists, or apparently ever has existed; and on this fact, as contrasted with our own practice, I would venture to quote the remarks made by a distinguished Anglo-Indian, Sir Charles Hobhouse, Bart., in presiding at a recent Poor Law Conference: 'He had passed the greater portion of his life in India . . . and what had occurred to him as a person coming fresh to the subject [the relief of the distressed and the poor] would perhaps astonish gentlemen present who had been accustomed to look upon the question of relief as an institution of the country. Why should there be any relief at all? He had passed, as he had told them, the whole of his career in a country the civilization of which dated back something very anterior to any civilization of this country — something like three thousand years. In that country there was no system of pauper relief, and, as far as he knew, there never had been any . . . There were sickness, insanity, and other diseases to be dealt with; but, so far as the administration of charity to the poor was concerned, that was done by the people themselves, and had been done by them for the last three thousand years . . . He did not wish to lay too much stress on the fact, but it was just as well that it should be known that there was a vast country with a very ancient civilization, and with a population of nearly 200,000,000, where no system of poor relief had ever prevailed, and where yet, as far as his experience went, the poor had been as well cared for as in this country.'[1]

It has been observed, with a melancholy approach

[1] Speech of Sir Charles Hobhouse, Bart., at the West Midland Poor Law Conference held at Malvern, May, 1877.

to truth, that a public improvement often comes too late; for that, while it is being effected, there spring up other evils than those against which it is directed. But what of this? Is it that no improvements should be even attempted? Nay, this would be to contradict our best instincts, and to paralyse benevolent efforts; even to ignore the benevolence of Providence in the ordering of human affairs to the best ends by human means. Surely hopefulness is the better philosophy; and it is the truest wisdom to aim at bettering the condition of our fellows, while the results are left in faith to a higher Hand, by which the destinies of nations are shaped.

Without, therefore, indulging in any visionary anticipations of social and economic perfection to be wrought amongst ourselves by the gradual and ultimate abolition of the noxious system in question, or drawing too bright a picture of the England of the future, we may, at least, encourage the modest hope that the change will be prospered to the benefit of the community, and that the morality, the temperance, the self-respect, the regard for the rights and interests of others, the sense of domestic and of relative duty, the frugal and provident virtues, on the part of the wages-earning population, will be greatly promoted, their enterprise and intelligence quickened; that these classes will take their proper social position as independent sellers of skilled work and labour to independent buyers at a price coming up more nearly to the natural value of those commodities than can possibly be maintained so long as that price is weighed down by Poor Law taxation; and that in temporary default of ability to sell that

work and labour, an unusual case in the natural order of things, or failing the ability to work, through old age, sickness, or accident, they will ordinarily support themselves by the produce of their own provident savings; or, in exceptional cases, will be supported by the help of their more prosperous relatives and friends; or, in the last resort, by eleemosynary bounty, ever ready to help the deserving, whether in the way of individual or of organised charity.

Whenever the labour-market becomes overstocked in a country and the growth of population threatens to press on the limits of subsistence, the remedy which Providence seems to have ordained is emigration to more thinly-peopled parts of the earth. 'The earth hath He given to the children of men.' If mankind were to 'increase and multiply,' they were in consequence to 'replenish the earth and subdue it,' not to remain in a fixed spot, outrunning the increase of its produce, consuming each other's substance, and augmenting the general amount of poverty. Emigration, in fact, *has* been the means by which the earth has been so far occupied as it is. Nations, like bees, when they have become too numerous for the native hive, have sent forth their swarms to other places of settlement. Our municipal law, unfortunately, supplies motives in counteraction of the natural law of human extension, and though this extension still takes place to a considerable degree from amongst us, prevents its natural effect of permanently improving the condition of those who remain behind in this country. Our host of paupers is not reduced by emigration, for the new recruits which the Poor Laws always gather round the standard of

pauperism quickly fill up the vacant ranks. But if these laws no longer existed, emigration would quickly have free course in relieving poverty in those who go away, and in checking its growth among those who are left behind. It would aid in taking away the reason for which Poor Laws exist. And why should the supernumerary hand-workers in crowded localities shrink from transferring their labour to countries where labour is wanted, when the fortuneless sons of the middle and upper middle classes are ready to carry their energy and intelligence to any part of the world, where an apparent field may offer itself for the profitable exercise of those qualities?

The honest and manly independence of self-help will, in the absence of Poor Laws, replace both the abject dependence on the enforced help of others and the defiant and ill-conditioned independence which is based on the knowledge that such help can always be demanded. With self-respect will come simpler and less sensual habits of life. The produce of prudent economy will bring an increase of solid comfort to the homes of the wages-earners, weakening the attractions of ale-houses and gin-shops, and by thus diminishing drunkenness, diminishing also the amount of crime.

Improved habits of life will be attended by a proportionate decrease in the amount of the disease and insanity now abounding in our population, and resulting in heavy taxation on our own resources. Ragged clothing and squalid dwellings will be less often seen in our streets and villages. Instead of large inert masses, helplessly depending on the parish and the dole, there will be honest and active numbers of workers, depend-

ing for support on their own exertions under the blessing of Providence, and resorting to the benevolence of the more prosperous only under the pressure of a rare necessity, bringing with it no loss of manly self-respect. Thus a long course of erroneous legislation will have been retraced, a vast amount of moral energy called forth, motives to frugality will be re-imposed on those who have the means of being frugal, and the Dispauperization of England accomplished.

Like disease and other ills to which flesh is heir, indigence cannot be prevented or abolished by any human contrivance; compulsory relief only increases and extends it. The outcome of men's self-interests, passions, vices, and follies, working conflictingly and confusedly in society, it will continue to be thrown up by that boiling sea while human nature continues to be what it is. Meanwhile, as manifold experience seems to show, the only chance of the 'minimization' and mitigation of indigence lies in the obvious resource of self-help, supplemented, whenever that may fail, by the never-failing action of benevolence in all its varied forms.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

00027041

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018